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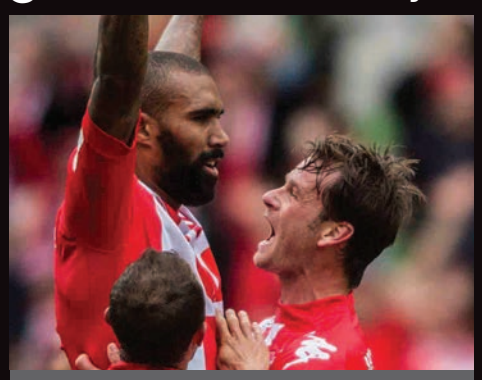

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SOCCEROOS DRAW SOUTH KOREA, KUWAIT & OMAN IN ASIAN CUP 2015

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AFC ASIAN CUP DRAW PROVIDES TASTY APPETISER

By Simon Maher

The unveiling of the official draw for the AFC Asian Cup slowly draws open the curtain on the first act of what might prove to be not just one of the biggest sporting events staged in Australia, but one of the most influential as well.

The Cup will bring 16 of Asia's biggest footballing nations to these shores and attract a massive viewing audience throughout Asia and beyond. It will be the biggest footballing event hosted in Australia since the 1993 World Youth Cup, and the largest sporting event since the 2000 Olympic Games held in Sydney.

On these grounds alone the Asian Cup is a very big deal. However it is likely that the impact of the tournament will reverberate well beyond the stadiums in which the matches are played, and long after the confetti showered on the eventual victors is swept away.

The staging of the Asian Cup in Australia will bring the home nation and its people into direct contact with the nations of its region in a way that sporting events excel at. While Australia boasts a long and illustrious history of competing in the world's biggest sporting events, none brings home the geographical and historical realities quite like the Asian Cup will.

To bring this fact into sharper focus, one only needs to scan some of the most iconic sporting achievements and ritualistic rivalries of sport in this country. The Ashes in cricket, even the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, have provided the stage for a wealth of collective sporting heritage. However none of these brings home the sense of regional engagement that the Asian Cup will.

When the sixteen teams assemble for the tournament in January next year they will not only bring their own squads and officials, but also a retinue of media, fans and tourists alike. And over the course of the tournament these groups will all play their roll in the gathering and sharing of information that will extend from strictly footballing issues into cultural, economic and historical matters. It will be an all-encompassing travelling road show in which football will be the centrepiece that brings together the people and cultures of the region on a scale not seen here before.

As the golden afterglow of the Sydney Olympics still lingers, it is easy to understand the capacity of sport to bring people together in a spirit of celebration. The Asian Cup will provide extra layers to this base.

In strictly sporting terms the hosting of the Asian Cup will provide local fans with an unprecedented peek behind a hitherto mostly mysterious event. For the person in the street, the global reach of the European Cup and the English Premier League has ensured that they not only know that Ronaldo plays for Real Madrid and Rooney for United, but they probably also own a shirt with their name on the back. Thanks to electronic media Football fans can access scores and reports from around the globe and are as conversant discussing the Eredivisie in Holland or the Clausura or Apertura in Argentina.

Asian football does not have the global glamour nor the marketing appeal of the world's most popular competitions. Consequently Asian football and its footballers have remained comparatively anonymous.

Many of these preconceived views will be shattered when the competition kicks off. Most people, including football fans will be shocked when they observe the professionalism of teams like Japan and South Korea who will arrive with the latest in cutting edge preparation and tactical acumen. The preparation of these teams will reflect the importance of the Asian Cup, as well as the stature of the nations they represent.

The "Blue Samurai" of Japan represents a nation of some 127 million people who share the third richest GDP's in the world, on a list topped by The United States. Oh and guess who is in second spot? That would be China, who will also be competing in Australia cheered on by some 1.350 billion fans back home.

It's when you start looking at the football teams of this region through these prisms that a fuller picture of Asian football begins to emerge. It will be in this context that people will fully appreciate where such talents as Shinji Kagawa, Keisuke Honda, and Yuto Nagatomo developed. This Japanese trio of starlets are currently wearing the emblems of giants Manchester United, AC Milan and Inter respectively.

If we throw in just two more examples, South Korea's Son Heung-Min at Leverkusen or Ki Sung-Yeung at Sunderland it is clear that football in the Asian Confederation is moving ahead in leaps and bounds. The Asian Cup will provide the clues which explain how this calibre of players is developed and in which direction the game's coaching, administration and match preparation is heading.

There are many more examples of players currently playing in the big leagues of the world. For just one, take Iran's Ashkan Dejagah currently with Fulham, who will be on our shores representing their nations in January 2015. Australian fans will have the opportunity to witness these players at first hand, and it is likely they will be shocked by the quality of football their teams provide.

The exposure of the Asian Cup will provide long lasting legacies for football in this country. Not only will the footballing super powers of Asia provide benchmarks for the games development here, but the minnows also will surprise many with their capacity to extract the optimum from their playing resources. And who knows, the 2015 edition of the Asian Cup may just throw up the type of unlikely fairy-tale that Iraq provided in 2007, when they emerged from a country ravaged by war to triumph against the mightiest of odds.

The Asian Cup will impact on Australian sport for years to come in the same way that the hosting of the World Youth Cup Finals of 1981 and 1993 in Australia opened up the imagination of the sporting public, and created an indelible impression upon football fans. These tournaments showed nothing compares to the experience of watching international football live in person in the same way that hosting world football tournaments bring sports into local people's lives in ways that distant events shown via satellite cannot.

Young impressionable footballers will be able to 'taste' what football at this level is really all about. Whilst they may watch football from all over the globe on their TV or lap tops nothing will concentrate their focus like the Asian Cup will, as nothing fires the imagination like watching footballers in the flesh.

And while they are being drawn in by the skills of the Kagawa's and Heung-Min's they will also be subtly adjusting their focus away from the European leagues. Watching the stars of Asian football perform here will enrich peoples understanding of football in this region and its connections with the world biggest leagues and more storied stages.

The other major impact of the Asian Cup will be that it continues to act as the 'Bell wether' event for football in the region. Japan's current position at the apex of Asian football is reflected in their Cup record, having won in 1992, 2000, 2004, and 2011 where they of course defeated the Socceroo's. South Korea finished in third spot in the preceding 2007 and 2011tournaments.

One can draw a line that connects these performances with the strength of club football in these countries with Japan and South Korea providing six of the victors over the last 8 seasons of the AFC Asian Club Championships League.

And lastly and most importantly from our point of view the Asian Cup will reveal much about our game and where our Socceroos are in the firmament of world football. The Socceroos boast an enviable record at the Cup having advanced into the final four twice in their only two appearances. They produced some outstanding performances to make the 2011 final where arch rivals Japan again inflicted a grievous Asian Cup blow to send the 'Roos out of the tournament.

Home hopes will be high that the local heroes can finally bring home the Cup, but as previous Cups have shown, Asian footballs show piece rarely follows the script that is expected.

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Socceroos To Take On Korea Republic At AFC Asian Cup

Australia will face off against two-time continental champions Korea Republic after the draw for next year's Asia Cup 2015 finals was made at the Sydney Opera House on Wednesday evening.

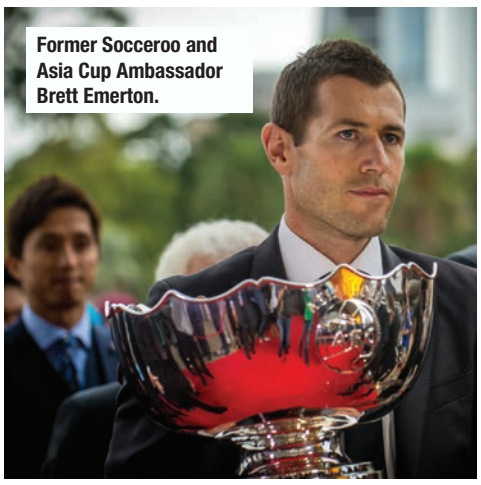
Oman and 1980 winners Kuwait round out Group A of the AFC Asian Cup, with the Socceroos facing Kuwait in the opening game of the tournament on January 9 at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium.

Defending champions Japan, who defeated the Australians in the final of the 2011 tournament in Qatar, have been drawn in Group D, where they will take on Jordan, 2007 champions Iraq and the winners of the 2014 AFC Challenge Cup, which will be played in the Maldives in May.

Alberto Zaccheroni's men find out who will complete Group D when the AFC Challenge Cup finishes on May 30.

The entrants in that competition are Laos, Turkmenistan, Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, Myanmar, Afghanistan and the hosts Maldives.

IR Iran, who have won the Asia Cup title on three occasions, head up Group C where they will take part in an all Middle Eastern group also comprising the United Arab Emirates, finalists in 1996, Qatar and Bahrain.



Former Socceroo and Asia Cup Ambassador Brett Emerton.

The ASIA Cup arrives at the Sydney Opera House

Uzbekistan, semi-finalists in 2011, are the top seeds in Group B, where they meet three-time winners Saudi Arabia, two-time finalists China PR and 2012 AFC Challenge Cup winners DPR Korea.

Iran have not won the competition since 1976 but will be favourites to progress from the group as the highest ranked team in Asia, sitting 42nd in the FIFA world rankings.

They are also one of four nations in the tournament to have qualified for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, along with the hosts, the defending champions, and South Korea.

As host nation, the Socceroos were seeded in the top tier of teams for the tournament and were placed in the A1 position of the groups.

The Socceroos will face Kuwait in the opening match of the AFC Asian Cup 2015 on 9 January in Melbourne, followed by Oman on 13 January in Sydney with their final group match against Korea Republic on 17 January in Brisbane.

The Socceroos have played Kuwait at senior men's international level on ten occasions and last played each other back in January 2010 in an AFC Asian Cup 2011 Qualifier in Kuwait where they drew 2-2.

The Socceroos have defeated Oman three times, drawn three times and lost once.

The Socceroos were also drawn with the Korea Republic at the AFC Asian Cup 2011 and have met 26 times in total, the most recent match at the EAFF East Asian Cup where they played out a scoreless draw.

AFC ASIAN CUP Australia 2015

The Groups

Group A: Australia, Korea Republic, Oman, Kuwait

Group B: Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, China PR, DPR Korea

Group C: IR Iran, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain

Group D: Japan, Jordan, Iraq, AFC Challenge Cup 2014 winners

Group A Fixtures

Australia v Kuwait
Melbourne Rectangular Stadium, Melbourne 09 Jan 2015:

Korea Republic v Oman,
Canberra Stadium, Canberra 10 Jan 2015:

Kuwait v Korea Republic
Canberra Stadium, Canberra 13 Jan 2015

Oman v Australia
Stadium Australia, Sydney 13 Jan 2015

Australia v Korea Republic
Brisbane Stadium, Brisbane 17 Jan 2015

Oman v Kuwait
Newcastle Stadium, Newcastle 17 Jan 2015:

Road to the Final

Quarter Finals
QF1 - *22 January 2015 1A v 2B Melbourne Rectangular Stadium, Melbourne*

QF2 – *22 January 2015 1B v 2A Brisbane Stadium, Brisbane*

QF3 – *23 January 2015 1C v 2D Stadium Australia, Sydney*

QF4 – *23 January 2015 1D v 2C Canberra Stadium, Canberra*

Semi Finals
SF1 – 26 January 2015
Winner QF1 v Winner QF3
Stadium Australia, Sydney

SF2 – 27 January 2015
Winner QF2 v Winner QF4
Newcastle Stadium, Newcastle

3rd/4th Play-Off
30 January 2015:
Loser SF1 v Loser SF2
Newcastle Stadium, Newcastle

AFC Asian Cup 2015 Final
31 January 2015
Winner SF1 v Winner SF2
Stadium Australia, Sydney

ANGE READY FOR ASIAN CUP CHALLENGE

What The Coaches Said...

Australia coach Ange Postecoglou believes that should AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015 hosts Australia progress from a group which contains former champions Korea Republic and Kuwait as well as Oman they will be "serious contenders" for a maiden continental title at the start of next year.

Australia will face 1980 champions Kuwait in the opening game of the tournament on January 9 at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium, before taking on Oman and then two-time champions Korea following Wednesday's group stage draw in Sydney.

And with 2007 quarter-finalists Australia looking to bounce back their heartbreaking 2011 final defeat by Japan, Postecoglou is looking forward to his side's Group A challenge.

"You can create some really special moments and create your own legacy if you can win a tournament in your own country," said Postecoglou.

"Every opponent in our group needs to be respected. The beauty of having a tough group, as we do, is that if you get through it, you know you're a serious contender in the knockout stages of the tournament."

Defending champions Japan, who along with Australia, Korea and IR Iran will represent Asia at the 2014 FIFA World Cup later this year, headline Group D alongside Jordan, 2007 champions Iraq and the yet to be determined winner of the 2014 AFC Challenge Cup.

"We have played both teams in the World Cup qualifiers, and both matches were tough so we expect these matches will also be tough," said Japan Football Association General Secretary Hara Hiromi.

"(Iraq) are the U-22 champions and our national teams lost against them so it will be a tough match."

Three-time champions Iran, meanwhile, have been paired in Group C alongside the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain.

"It is a difficult group as it is traditionally difficult for Iran to play against those teams. There is a lot of tension and emotion every time they play against the Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain. But I think they have a chance to qualify for the next round," said Iran coach Carlos Queiroz.

"I'm sure that after the World Cup the team can have a lift with the preparation and the experience, they will be stronger when they start the Asian competition."

Finally, three-time winners Saudi Arabia, 2011 semi-finalists Uzbekistan, two-time finalists China PR and 2012 AFC Challenge Cup winners DPR Korea will face off in Group B.

"We knew that all the teams would be difficult and we also knew that a lot would rely on our hard work and preparation," said Saudi Arabia coach Juan Ramon Lopez Caro.

"All of the teams play at a very high level. At the moment we are very excited, we want to do a good job and try our hardest in every way.

"All games of football are complicated. Our rivals all play to a great quality and have good defence, but we also know that we will have to play at a great level in order to achieve a good result. We must prepare ourselves really well for each game."

Ange Postecoglou
Australia

Jorvan Vieira
Kuwait

"Tough group.....and it could have been better to avoid Australia and Korea
"We have to try to create a surprise, to compete against teams who are supposed to be better than us but why not, we have young players which we have to develop them to gel together
"We have to improve before coming
"We have refreshed the team but it is not enough, we have to get a good mix of experimental players and young players. We will be able to compete in the following years, and we have to compete next January also.
"We will try to first prepare for the Asian Cup to do well here and to give a good image of Oman, and we will do it.
We will arrive in Australia at the end of December, and will try to play two or three friendly games before beginning the competition. I think it is ideal"

Paul Le Guen
Oman

"Any competition we have to be excited, it's a promotion for the coaches and for the players, depending on the way we play and prepare our teams.
(When asked to compare the current Kuwait squad with his Iraqi champion winning team):
"Football is very special, what has happened yesterday cannot be the same as today or tomorrow.
"The Iraq team was another kind of style of football played; now we have different football. We won in 2007 because we had a focus on fitness.
"As coaches we have to evaluate in our career, we cannot keep it static in our thinking in the way we see football because in football there is evolution. It is a learning process for us. We cannot say I play 4-4-2 forever until I die. It's impossible sometimes, you have to play 4-5-1, 4-2-3-1, 4-3-3, depending on what you have in front of you to determine your tactics.
(Reaction to having to play Australia):
"Happy, happy"

Exclusive quotes compiled by Pablo Bateman.

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SCOREBOARD

ROUND TWENTY FOUR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last 5 matches
1 Brisbane Roar	24	15	3	6	40	21	+19	48	W D W W L
2 Western Sydney Wanderers	24	10	8	6	29	24	+5	38	W D L L W
3 Melbourne Victory	24	10	6	8	35	39	-4	36	L W W L W
4 Central Coast Mariners	24	10	6	8	28	32	-4	36	W W L W L
5 Adelaide United	24	9	7	8	42	32	+10	34	W D L W L
6 Newcastle Jets	24	9	5	10	29	30	-1	32	W L W W L
7 Sydney FC	24	10	2	12	33	35	-2	32	L D W L W
8 Wellington Phoenix	24	7	7	10	34	42	-8	28	L D D L W
9 Melbourne Heart	24	6	7	11	31	35	-4	25	L D L W W
10 Perth Glory	24	5	7	12	22	33	-11	22	L L D L L

Western Sydney Wanderers 3 (Polenz 42', Bridge 61', Juric 78')
Perth Glory 0
Crowd: 12,128 @ Pirtek Stadium

Melbourne Heart 1 (Engelaar 34')
Central Coast Mariners 2 (Kim 46', Ibini 77')
Crowd: 5,418 @ AAMI Park

Brisbane Roar 1 (Luke BRATTAN (90+2')
Melbourne Victory 0
Crowd: 17, 965 @ Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane

Newcastle Jets 5 (Heskey, Griffiths, Taggart 2, Bridges)
Wellington Phoenix 0
Crowd: 9483 at Hunter Stadium

Adelaide United 3 (Ferreira 13, Cirio 55, Djite 88)
Sydney FC 1 (Thompson 74)
Crowd: 14,212 @ Coopers Stadium

THIS WEEK

Round 25	Fixture	Venue	Local	AEDT
Fri Mar 28	Brisbane Roar v Melbourne Heart	Suncorp Stadium	7:00 PM	8:00 PM
Sat Mar 29	Wellington Phoenix v Adelaide United	Westpac Stadium	5:30 PM	3:30 PM
Sat Mar 29	CC Mariners v West Syd Wanderers	Bluetongue Stadium	5:30 PM	5:30 PM
Sat Mar 29	Melbourne Victory v Sydney FC	AAMI Park	7:30 PM	7:30 PM
Sun Mar 30	Perth Glory v Newcastle Jets	NIB stadium	2:00 PM	5:00 PM

NEXT WEEK

Round 26	Fixture	Venue	Local	AEDT
Fri Apr 4	Adelaide United v Melbourne Heart	Hindmarsh Stadium	7:00 PM	7:30 PM
Sat Apr 5	Newcastle Jets v Melbourne Victory	Hunter Stadium	5:30 PM	5:30 PM
Sat Apr 5	West Sydney Wanderers v Brisbane Roar	Parramatta Stadium	7:30 PM	7:30 PM
Sat Apr 5	Perth Glory v Central Coast Mariners	NIB stadium	6:30 PM	9:30 PM
Sun Apr 6	Sydney FC v Wellington Phoenix	Allianz Stadium	5:00 PM	5:00 PM

AGAINST ALL ODDS

A-League Title 2013/14

Brisbane Roar	2.10
Wanderers	5.00
Adelaide United	7.50
Melbourne Victory	7.50
Sydney FC	13.0
Central Coast Mariners	15.0
Newcastle Jets	19.0
Wellington Phoenix	29.0
Melbourne Heart	51.0
Perth Glory	201

TOP GOAL SCORERS

A. Taggart	Newcastle	13
B. Berisha	Brisbane	11
D. Williams	Mel Heart	11
S. Huysegems	Wellington	10
J. Troisi	Mel Victory	10
J. Neumann	Adelaide Utd	9
Cirio	Adelaide Utd	8
A. Del Piero	Sydney	8
F.Ferreira	Adelaide Utd	8

A-LEAGUE TEAM OF THE WEEK Round 24

Compiled by Nick Amies

Jorome Polenz makes the TOTW after a solid performance. Photo: GEORGE MARIN

Three rounds remaining and finals football will have to wait another year for the Phoenix and Melbourne Heart after losses on the weekend, but there are still four teams playing for three spots at the bottom of the six. The top of the table clash between the Roar and Melbourne Victory produced three player for our selection, but who else joins them?

Lawrence Thomas – Melbourne Victory

If it were not for a sublime winner off the boot of Luke Brattan, Thomas would have secured a valiant clean sheet after an immense performance between the sticks. The young goalkeeper recently has been under fire for some high profile mistakes, but at Suncorp Stadium he was world class.

Jerome Polenz – Western Sydney Wanderers

The German defender has been a rather inconspicuous presence in the Wanderers side this season, but on Sunday he showed flashes of last season's brilliance with a barnstorming display on the right flank. Polenz opened his side's account after storming up the field just before half time and could have grabbed another in the second half.

Nigel Boogard – Adelaide United

The centre-half was shorn of his regular partner Jon McKain in the first half due to injury, but Boogard and Michael Marrone held down the fort in the second half. Boogard was a cool head at the back and starved the Sydney attack of any clear opportunities and was unlucky to be denied a clean sheet by Matt Thompson.

Zac Anderson – Central Coast Mariners

The young defender has improved beyond sight this campaign despite a mid-season slump and now looks to be an exciting prospect for Phil Moss and the Mariners. Freak wonder goal aside, Anderson and his teammates seemed to be more than capable of repelling whatever the Heart threw at them, with the young defender even pulling off a desperate goal-line clearance to prevent the home side from scoring.

Nick Montgomery – Central Coast Mariners

The hardened Englishman is not afraid of doing the unimpressive work while others occupy the spotlight and he was at it again at AAMI Park, shielding the back four as well as providing his teammates with an outlet to play out of defence. Experienced heads like Montogmery will be crucial if the Mariners are to defend their title this season.

Liam Miller – Brisbane Roar

The Roar were locked into a battle of technicians against the likes of Gui Finkler and Tom Rogic at Suncorp Stadium, but Liam Miller rose to the challenge. The Irishman exhibited all the class and guile he has accumulated during his career, creating a number of chances for his teammates and rarely misplacing a pass.

Marcelo Carrusca – Adelaide United

Adelaide United played themselves back into form on Friday night against Sydney FC and Marcelo Carrusca was at his sublime best. A genius pass through the defensive line allowed Fabio Ferreira to open the scoring, before Carrusca's run through the heart of the Sydney defence precipitated Cirio's tap-in for the second of the game and put the result beyond doubt.

Youssouf Hersi – Western Sydney Wanderers

Hersi was a livewire on the right hand side against the inexperienced Jack Clisby at Pirtek Stadium, wreaking havoc with his darting runs in and around the box. He may not have scored the goal his performance deserved, but the tricky Dutchman was able to pick out Tom Juric in the middle of the box for the game's final goal.

Adam Taggart – Newcastle Jets

The young striker duly announced his intention to claim the golden boot with a brace of finely taken strikes, propelling him two goals clear of his nearest challenger. Taggart is easily the most improved player of the season from the previous campaign, but will his goals lead the Jets to the finals?

Bruce Djite – Adelaide United

He may not be the shining example of the tiki-taka football Josep Gombau is trying to produce in Adelaide, but he is certainly an essential part of the puzzle. Using his physicality to occupy defenders, Djite allows for United's foreign contingent to play their dynamic short passing game as well as providing a goal threat up front, exhibited by his beautiful turn and finish against the Sky Blues on Friday.

Thomas Broich – Brisbane Roar

Jason Geria is a defender with a bright future, but for all his potential he had no chance of stopping Thomas Broich on Saturday night. The German demonstrated why he is one of the competition's best, constantly drawing the attentions of multiple defenders to create space for his teammates before finding them with pinpoint passes.

Brattan Blast Secures Plate For Roar

Brisbane Roar 1

Melbourne Victory 0

Match Details

Brisbane Roar 1 (Luke Brattan, 90+2')
Melbourne Victory 0
Saturday, 22 March 2014
Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane
Referee: Peter Green
Crowd: 17, 965

Brisbane Roar: 1. Michael Theo, 2. Matthew Smith (C), 3. Shane Stefanutto, 10. Henrique (16. Jean Carlos Solorzano 76'), 11. Liam Miller (8. Steven Lustica 85'), 14. Diogo Ferriera, 17. Matt Mckay, 18. Luke Brattan, 19. Jack Hingert, 22. Thomas Broich, 23. Dimitri Petratos

Substitutes Not Used: 20. Matthew Acton (Gk), 27. Devante Clut, 28. Brandon Borrello
Yellow CArds: Luke Brattan 69'
Red Cards: Nil

Melbourne Victory: 5. Mark Milligan (C), 6. Leigh Broxham, 7. Guilherme Finkler, 9. Kosta Barbarouses (22. Jesse Makarounas 80'), 14. James Troisi (10. Archie Thompson 62'), 17. James Jeggo, 20. Lawrence Thomas (Gk), 21. Tomas Rogic, 23. Adrian Leijer, 24. Scott Galloway, 25. Jason Geria

Substitutes Not Used: 1. Nathan Coe (Gk), 16. Rashid Mahazi, 31. Dylan Murnane
Yellow Cards: Leigh Broxham 38', James Jeggo 89'
Red Cards: Nil

ByJarrod Ellis

A 0-0 score line looked the likely outcome but once again Suncorp Stadium was host to late game heroics as Luke Brattan struck in the 92nd minute.

The 1-0 win over Melbourne Victory secured the Premiers Plate for Brisbane, four weeks shy of the finals series, a result that was greeted with jubilation by the players and the fans.

Brisbane came into the match with a makeshift back four, Ivan Franjic, Jade North, James Donachie and Corey Brown all absent due to injury. At the other end Besart Berisha was sidelined after his red card against Sydney, the A-League's top striker now having missed a full third of the season to date with a combination of injuries and suspension.

Victory arrived at Suncorp Stadium on a run of good form that most recently included the 1-0 win over Yokohama F Marinos the previous Tuesday night. Mark Milligan and Tomas Rogic were rested for that encounter but returned to the starting eleven as Kevin Muscat juggles the dual commitments of the A-League and Asian Champions League.

From the outset the match was played with a high tempo, both sides searching for the ball, the first shot not arriving until the 11th minute as Henrique forced Lawrence Thomas into a parried save from outside the area.

Liam Miller then should have put his side ahead in the 13th minute. Brisbane worked a lovely move on the right between Thomas Broich, Matt McKay and Diogo Ferreira that resulted in Miller open for a shot just left of the penalty spot but once again Thomas was there with a save.

Melbourne struggled to get their creative players into the match with Roar content to control possession, Matt McKay running the show for the home side.

Luke Brattan looked to belt a long range shot into the net in the 28th minute but the ball flashed well over. The only reward for his effort was a grimace and an injury that would cause the match to be brought to a halt barely a minute later.

When play returned it was Melbourne on the front foot as Tomas Rogic brought the first save from Michael Theo in the 32nd minute.

Kosta Barbarouses then had Roar hearts in mouths as he broke onto a long ball on the counter. Ferreira was only just able to get back in time and Barbarouses was dispossessed when so much more had been on offer.

Victory were coming into their own and in the 36th minute Theo had to perform an excellent reaction save to prevent James Troisi from scoring.

The remainder of the first half didn't have quite the end to end thrills as the preceding thirty-five minutes but when the whistle blew the 17,965 strong crowd could have had no complaints.

In the opening fifteen minutes of the second half McKay, Petratos and Henrique all found the space for an effort on goal but none were able to give Brisbane that much yearned for lead.

Henrique then had an excellent chance in the 62nd minute, a Liam Miller through ball slipped the Brazilian behind Adrian Leijer but Lawrence Thomas was out once more to deny Brisbane.

Suncorp Stadium has been the scene for many great moments for Brisbane in the A-League and with the match coming to a close it proved to be so once again.

Luke Brattan, floored by injury in the first half collected the ball thirty yards out, seemingly of little threat to the Victory goal. However with tired minds and bodies coming into play Guilherme Finkler didn't close Brattan down fast enough and he rifled a shot into the bottom left hand corner of the net.

David Gallop was on hand to present Matt Smith with the trophy after the match, the Roar skipper sharing some words with the crowd before lifting the trophy.

"This isn't something that's happened over night we were very, very hurt form last year," he said.

"We came back with a mission to work hard and put this club back where it should be. This is only half the job, we have to push on from here and win the finals series".

1-0 Luke Bratten scores deep into injury time to clinch a well-deserved Premiers Plate for Brisbane Roar.

Lawrence Thomas had a busy afternoon and makes a point blank save from Henrique.

Tom Rogic tries to escape the attention of Luke Bratten.

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Photos: BEN NEVILLE

High Fives For Jets As Phoenix Flamed

Newcastle Jets

5

Wellington Phoenix

0

Match Details

Newcastle Jets 5 (Heskey, Griffiths, Taggart 2, Bridges)
Wellington Phoenix 0
Crowd: 9483 at Hunter Stadium

Newcastle Jets: 20.Ben Kennedy, 15.Joshua Brillante, 21.Samuel Gallaway, 4.Kew Jaliens, 14.Joshua Mitchell, 8.Ruben Zadkovich, 29.Joel Griffiths, 23.David Carney (24. Matthew Oxborrow), 22.Adam Taggart (19.Michael Bridges), 6.Zenon Caravella, 9.Emile Heskey (11.Craig Goodwin).

Yellow Cards: Brillante, Zadkovich.
Red cards: None

Wellington Phoenix: 1.Glen Moss, 5.Michael Boxhall, 25.Shaun Timms, 22.Andrew Durante, 2.Manny Muscat, 17.Vince Lia, 23.Matthew Ridenton (15.Jason Hicks), 9.Kenny Cunningham, 24.Roy Krishna (11.Jeremy Brockie), 12.Tyler Boyd (19.Hamish Watson), 10.Stein Huysegems.

Yellow Cards: Cunningham
Red Cards: None

By FFA

A double from Adam Taggart has steered Newcastle Jets to a thumping 5-0 victory over a lack-luster Wellington Phoenix outfit at Hunter Stadium.

Emile Heskey scored his first goal for the campaign late in the first half to give the Jets the lead before a classy volley from Joel Griffiths just after the interval extended the hosts advantage.

Two goals from Socceroo Adam Taggart and a late stunner from veteran Michael Bridges rounded out an emphatic second half for the Jets and moved them into the top six.

The match got underway in warm conditions on a patchy Hunter Stadium surface and it was the home side who adjusted to the conditions the better and enjoyed the majority of possession in the opening stages.

The Jets created the first opportunity in the 13th minute through Griffiths who brilliantly made space for himself inside the Phoenix area but he blasted his shot from a tight angle just over the bar.

Despite a bright opening by the hosts, the Phoenix gradually worked their way into the contest and looked threatening on the counter attack through Roy Krishna and Tyler Boyd down the flanks.

The Phoenix created their first opportunity in the 19th minute following a lovely one-two on the edge of the area between Boyd and Stein Huysegems but Boyd's shot from a tight angle was well smothered by Jets keeper Ben Kennedy.

The contest lacked continuity in the ensuing period as both sides were guilty of committing a number of fouls and niggly fouls which ensured the contest became a stop-start affair.

The Jets settled into a rhythm as the half wore on and began to dominate possession as the Phoenix began to sit deep in their own half and play on the counter attack.

The hosts nearly made their dominance count in the 25th minute after a lovely cross from Josh Mitchell found Taggart but the Socceroo's header was well kept out by Phoenix custodian Glen Moss.

Wellington had a glorious chance to grab an unlikely lead in the 29th minute after a lovely run from Roy Krishna teed up Stein Huysegems but the Belgian blasted his shot well over the crossbar.

The Jets forced five corners in the first half and their pressure eventually paid dividends with Emile Heskey on hand to net his first goal of the season in the 35th minute.

Ruben Zadkovich whipped in a driven corner to the near post which was flicked on by Josh Mitchell and found its way to the former England international who coolly prodded home from close range.

The former Liverpool star nearly doubled the advantage in the first minute of the second half after being played in behind by Joel Griffiths but his shot was excellently palmed wide by Moss.

But the Jets doubled their advantage from the ensuing corner after a lovely delivery from David Carney picked out an unmarked Griffiths who smashed a sweetly timed volley past a despairing Moss.

The Jets began to assert their authority on the contest and made it 3-0 in the 57th minute after a beautiful cross from Zenon Caravella picked out an unmarked Taggart on the six yard box to nod home.

The injury depleted Phoenix lacked a cutting edge in the final third and found it difficult to fashion clear cut opportunities against a well organised Jets defence.

The visitors best opportunity came in the 65th minute after the Jets were penalised for a back pass but the ensuing indirect free kick from 15 yards was easily cleared by the hosts.

The Jets added a fourth goal in the 77th minute through golden boot favourite Taggart who picked up a loose ball inside the Phoenix area before his deflected shot left Moss with no chance.

The home side finished by far the stronger and secured an emphatic victory in stoppage time with a stunning half volley through veteran striker Michael Bridges.

The home town favourite was picked out on the edge of the area by Craig Goodwin before he curled an audacious effort into the far corner past a despairing Moss.

1-0 Former Liverpool ace Emile Heskey opens the floodgates for the Jets.

Match Stats

34	Tackles	12
14	Total Shots	6
340	Total Passes	420
46%	Possession	54%
7	Corners	1
5	Offsides	3
21	Fouls committed	13

Man of the Match
Adam Taggert (Jets)

The Jets are off to a five-star performance.

Emile Heskey and Joel Griffiths are on the double and enjoy a goal-scoring day out.

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Unstoppable United Sense Finals Football

Adelaide United 3

Sydney FC 1

Match Details

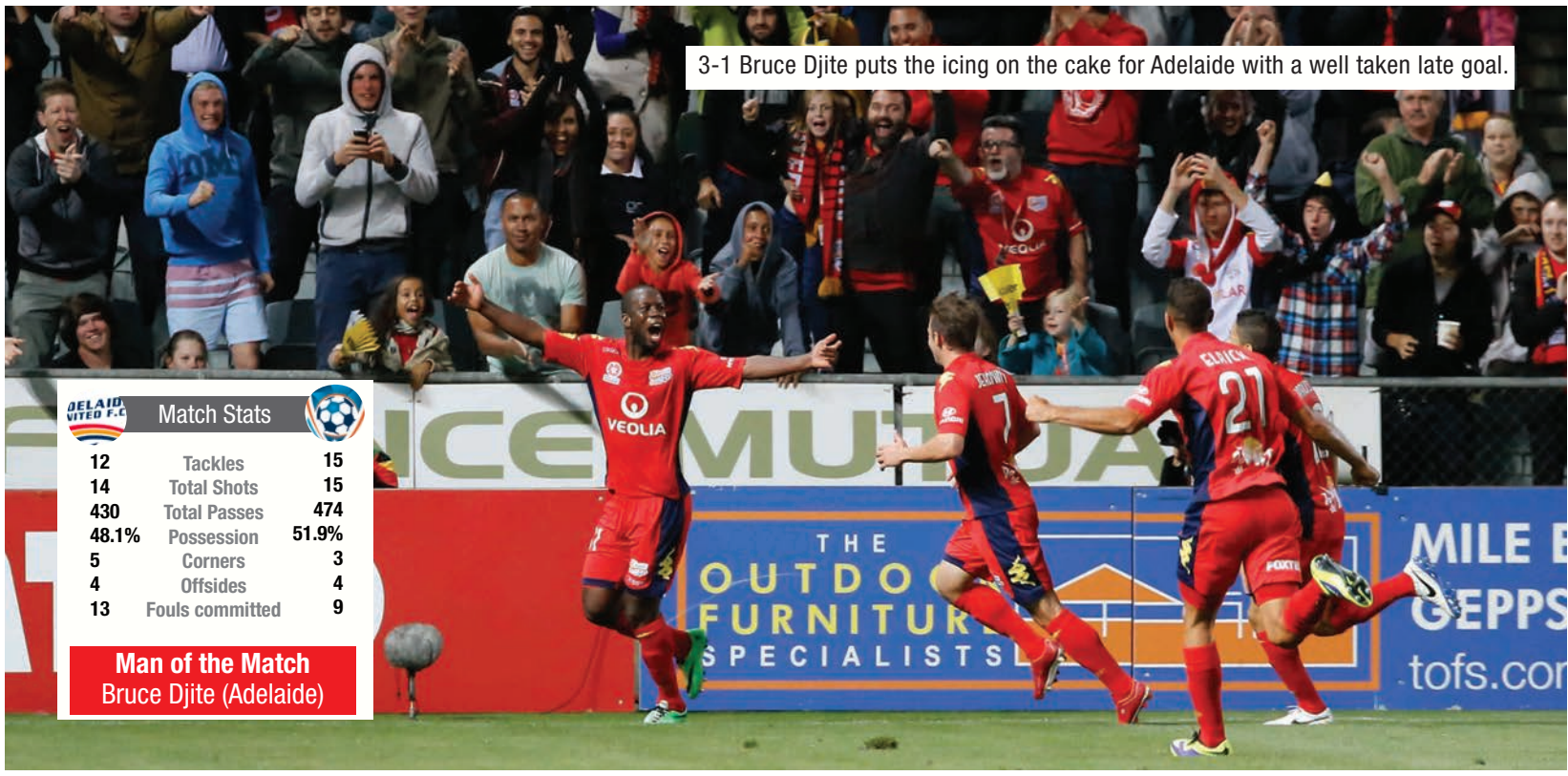
Adelaide United 3 (Ferreira 13, Cirio 55, Djite 88)
Sydney FC 1 (Thompson 74)
Crowd: 14,212.
Venue: Coopers Stadium

Adelaide United: 1. Eugene Galekovic, 21.Tarek Elrich, 4.Jon Mckain (2.Michael Marrone), 3.Nigel Boogaard, 18.Michael Zullo (23. Jordan Elsey), 14.Cameron Watson, 22.Fabio Farreira, 9.Sergio Cirio (7.Jeronimo Neumann), 8.Marcelo Carrusca, 11.Bruce Djite.

Yellow Cards: Elrich.
Red Cards: None

Sydney FC: 20.Vedran Janjetovic, 2.Sebastian Ryall, 5.Matt Jurman, 6.Nikola Petkovic, 13.Sasa Ognenovski, 22.Ali Abbas, 24.Hagi Gligor, 17.Terrry Antonis (17.Joel Chianese), 29.ALec Urosevski, 10.Alessandro Del Piero (9.Corey Gameiro), 11.Richard Garcia (28. Matt Thompson).

Yellow Cards: Ognenovski, Antonis, Urosevski, Del Piero, Garcia., Chianese.
Red Cards: None



3-1 Bruce Djite puts the icing on the cake for Adelaide with a well taken late goal.

Match Stats

12	Tackles	15
14	Total Shots	15
430	Total Passes	474
48.1%	Possession	51.9%
5	Corners	3
4	Offsides	4
13	Fouls committed	9

Man of the Match
Bruce Djite (Adelaide)

By Matt Mays

Adelaide United produced arguable their finest performance of the season in front of a packed Adelaide crowd on Friday night, easing past A Sydney side with flare, pace and superb goals, shooting the Reds into fourth on the Hyundai A-League ladder and inches away from a finals spot.

Ferreira, a man in the form of his life, struck first after a fine run. Then Cirio and Djite got in on the act in the second half. Sky Blue's substitute Matt Thompson pulled a goal back for the visitors late on but it was a mere consolation on what was a quite dominant performance from the Reds once again at home.

Questions were asked of Adelaide, after failing to beat either of the top few teams in the previous few rounds, falling to Victory and Brisbane away respectively, and drawing blanks in Western Sydney. Their Sky Blue counterparts though came into this one on the back of a derby win and a healthy draw against the Roar. But even this one was a step to far.

Sydney attempted to start the tie in a physical fashion to slow down Adelaide's tempo in the ball, but it was only a matter of time for Gombau's side to produce their flowing passing game to great effect.

Ferreira opened the scoring on thirteen minutes in style. After racing down the Sydney right, the Portuguese made a defender look like a fool with a class dummy before placing the ball cooley under Janjetovic.

The heat started to rise and Sydney's physical game sent tempers sky high after a fierce challenge on Marcelo Currusca, but the home side rose above the tension and headed into the sheds with a goal advantage.

Frank Farina's men came out the second half with a different shape. But his high line failed miserably as the Reds killed the game off with ease and precision.

Just ten minutes had passed after the break when Currusca again produced an amazing run through the middle of the park. His shot was saved though from Janjetovic but he could not stop Cirio from slotting the ball over him into the far corner. It was another well worked counter attack straight from the Adelaide Shores training park.

Del Piero failed to rise to the Cooper's crowd yet again but that did not stop the home crowd giving the world cup winner a respectful and resounding standing ovation when he was substituted on sixty-six minutes.

After Adelaide secured their second goal, they became their usual conservative self and were very happy to maintain possession, often frustrating the Adelaide home faithful with some tense moments at the back.

The visitors did give a minor scare to Adelaide. In fact it was Del Piero's replacement. Within ten minutes of coming on, Matt Thompson slotted home a quite magnificent finish on the turn from just inside the box to give the Sky Blues a glimmer of hope.

But Gombau and his side remained professional and maintained their solid approach of keeping the ball and moving forward as a team.

The fans though took a big sigh of relief with two minutes of the tie remaining when crowd favourite Bruce Djite sent Gombau running down the touchline in jubilation with a smart finish into the corner to seal the tie. The goal sparked celebrations to suggest the togetherness in the Adelaide camp is at an all-time high and they really are UNITED.

The final whistle sent Cooper's Stadium into a party atmosphere as the Reds have one foot firmly in the finals and leaves Sydney outside the top 6 with a massive tie against Melbourne Victory next week.

Bruce Djite was extremely pleased with his performance but isn't taking anything for granted regarding finals football for Adelaide United.

"I am always happy to score but more happy that it was a double-point game," said Djite.

"It was massive, Sydney are now out of the six and we are in the four.

"We have three important games remaining against Wellington, Melbourne Heart and Newcastle. "We are one win off second and one loss off being out of the six, you can't slip up. Certainly the pressure is there every week."

Man of the match – Bruce Djite cause havoc for the Sydney backline tonight. His hold up play was second to none and his finish late on proved he is in hot form heading into the business end of the campaign.

Spills and thrill at Cooper Stadium as Fabio Farreira takes a tumble

Reds keeper Eugene Galekovic takes command in the box.

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Photos: GEORGE MARIN

Wanderers take Glory to Return to Winner's List

Western Sydney

3

Perth Glory

0

Match Details

Western Sydney Wanderers 3
(Jerome Polenz 41', Mark Bridge 60', Tomi Juric 78')
Perth Glory 0

At Pirtek Stadium, Parramatta
Referee: Tim McGilchrist
Crowd: 12,128

Western Sydney Wanderers:
1. Ante Covic (gk), 2. Shannon Cole, 6. Jerome Polenz, 4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley (c), 13. Matthew Spiranovic (21. Shinji Ono 63'), 17. Youssouf Hersi, 10. Aaron Mooy, 19. Mark Bridge, 11. Brendan Santalab (9. Tomi Juric 71'), 8. Mateo Poljak, 18. Iacopo LaRocca

Substitutes not used: 20. Jerrard Tyson (gk), 14. Kwabena Appiah-Kubi, 22. Dean Heffernan
Yellow cards: Shannon Cole 3', Jerome Polenz 54'
Red cards: Nil

Perth Glory:18. Jack Duncan (gk), 2. Jack Clisby (19. Joshua Risdon 72'), 36. William Gallas, 24. Matthew Davies, 23. Michael Thwaite, 7. Jacob Burns, 5. Rostyn Griffiths, 4. Ryan Edwards, 17. Chris Harold (28. Darvydas Sernas 61'), 8. Nebojsa Marinkovic (14. Steven McGarry 61'), 10. Jamie Maclaren

Subsituttes not used: 29. Luke Radonich (gk), 3. Brandon O'Neil
Yellow cards: Matthew Davies 24', Ryan Edwards 43'
Red cards: Nil

By Saman Ziaei

Just as the season is coming to an end, the Wanderers won in confident fashion against Perth Glory, firing 3 past the visitors and not conceding any, to see them back to second place on the ladder in front of 12,128 cheerful fans.

The game started at average pace, with the first real opportunity coming in the 14th minute as Shannon Cole disposed a Perth defender and crossed into Hersi. The short wing was able to connect his head onto it, but keeper Jack Duncan reacted quick and tipped it over the cross-bar.

In the 19th minute, after being awarded a free kick, Aaron Mooy saw his ball put into the box cleared, but only as far as Polenz, who was feeling confident and took a hard shot from outside the box with his right foot, but just went over the bar.

Another defensive error saw the quick man Hersi in the 27th minute create an opportunity, running into the box solo and taking a hard and low shot, but again it was Duncan with a great save. The ball returned straight back to Hersi who was able to hit it first time, but instead his first touch let him down and gave it softly right into the hands of the keeper, leaving Aaron Mooy, who was right beside him, very disgruntled.

The breakthrough came from an unexpected source, right back Jerome Polenz, who also acts as a winger on many occasions, received a nice pass from Hersi near the half way mark. He made his run through into the box and despite having his first shot blocked from a defender, he continued on and took another strike, going in between the legs and leaving no chance for Duncan this time.

Polenz celebrated his second goal in the league with an unexpected dance, giving the crowd much to cheer about as their first half domination looked to have produced some result and regaining second place looked much closer.

Second half was mostly the Wanderers dominating again, giving Perth very few chances of a comeback.

At the hour mark, mark Bridge made a great run from half way, seeing himself one verse one with Davies, able to get around him slightly and finish with a great strike doubling their lead and really putting the game beyond doubt.

The 77th minute saw another great opportunity come to Hersi in the box, but with no surprise, once again Duncan did a fantastic job at blocking his strike.

A couple minutes later and substitute Shinji Ono played through Hersi into the box and as the winger was denied on a few occasions in the evening decided to pass to his colleague, young Tomi Juric, who took just one touch to set himself up and smashed it into the top right corner leaving Duncan just standing there.

In the 84th minute it was Juric who was looking to return the favour to Hersi, playing through a ball to him that saw him one on one with the keeper, but to his utmost disappointment was denied again from the foot of the keeper. Tomi Juric rushed over quickly to console him, reminding him to keep his head up and keep trying.

The Wanderers jump back into scone spot as a last minute goal killed off Victory and saw Brisbane take the premier plate early. With only 3 games remaining, is still up for grabs as Western Sydney face Central Coast, just two points below them, who will also be wanting to prove themselves.

1-0 Jerome Polenz powers through to shoot home the opening goal for the Wanderers.

Match Stats

27	Tackles	17
23	Total Shots	9
375	Total Passes	424
47.8%	Possession	52.2%
6	Corners	1
4	Offsides	1
16	Fouls committed	14

Man of the Match
Youssouf Hersi (Wanderers)

2-0 Mark Bridge is congratulated for his well taken goal.

3-0 Tomi Juric puts the game beyond doubt and the Glory are left wanting.

Photos: LIVE PIXEL

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Orlando Magic But Mariners Take The Points

Melbourne Heart

MELBOURNE HEART

1

Central Coast

CENTRAL COAST MARINERS

2

Match Details

Melbourne Heart 1 (Orlando Engelaar 35')
Central Coast Mariners 2 (Kim Seung-Yong 45 + 2, Berni Ibini 77')
Venue: Aami Park
Attendance: 5,418
Referee: Hiroyuki Kimura

Melbourne Heart : 1. Andrew Redmayne (Gk), 3. Robbie Wielart, 4. Orlando Engelaar, 8. Massimo Murdocca, 7.Iain Ramsay (10.Harry Kewell 64'), 13. Jonatan Germano (21. Stefan Mauk 81') , 15. David Williams, 17. Jason Hoffman, 19. Benjamin Garrucio, 23. Mate Dugandzic, 24. Patrick Kisnorbo

Substitutes Not Used: 20. Tando Velhapi (Gk), 6.Patrick Gerhardt, 22. Nicholas Kalmar

Yellow Cards: Jonatan Germano 34'
Red Cards: Nil

Central Coast Mariners: 3. Joshua Rose, 4. Marcel Seip, 5. Zachary Anderson, 8. Nick Montgomery ©, 11. Nick Fitzgerald, 12. Liam Reddy (Gk), 17. Anthony Caceras, 19 Matt Simon (9. Mitchell Duke 74') , 21. Mile Sterjovski (20. Bernie Ibini 66'), 25. Eddy Bosnar, 26. Kim Seung-Yong (7. John Hutchinson 55')

Substitutes Not Used: 1. Justin Pasfield, 15. Storm Roux,

Yellow Cards: Nick Fitzgerald 59'

1-1 The Mariners are back on level terms after Korean star Kim Seung-Yong scores just before the break.

Match Stats		
9	Tackles	9
13	Total Shots	9
550	Total Passes	458
55%	Possession	45%
5	Corners	1
1	Offsides	0
15	Fouls committed	13

Man of the Match
Liam Reddy (Mariners)

By Chris Hearn

The Central Coast Mariners have all but ended the finals hopes of Melbourne Heart, after they fought back from 1-0 down to win 2-1 at AAMI Park.

John van't Schip's side dominated proceedings, and went ahead through a 60-yard wonder goal from Orlando Engelaar on 34 minutes. The Mariners equalised on the cusp of half-time as Korean import Kim Seung-yong struck and Bernie Ibini completed the comeback with 13 minutes to play.

In a scrappy opening, neither side found fluidity as the opposing midfielders negated the others' influence.

Phil Moss' side pressed well, denying Heart's danger-men any space between the lines early on. The home side grew in confidence eventually as Anthony Caceres and Nick Montgomery looked to tire.

David Williams capitalised on a poor back pass by Marcel Seip to fashion the first chance of the afternoon on 20 minutes, but he blazed over with Iain Ramsay available. Robbie Wielaert lofted a delicate ball over the Mariners rearguard to find Dugandzic, his dangerous cut-back brilliantly defended by Zach Anderson.

Minutes later, Jason Hoffman bombed forward and his cross was deflected by Josh Rose onto Liam Reddy's crossbar. The Heart were improving, but no one could sense what would come next.

Marquee man Engelaar produced a moment of magic on 34 minutes. Massimo Murdocca's block from a Nick Fitzgerald pass found the Dutchman bereft of options - and with Mariners' goalkeeper Reddy on the edge of the penalty area - the 34-year old shot from all of 60 yards.

The trajectory of the ball suggested it was goal-bound and the Heart faithful were celebrating even before it crossed the line. It was a below-par contest before Engelaar's effort illuminated it with arguably the best individual goal of the A-League era. Taking the lead in such spectacular fashion seemed to lift the work-rate of the home side. Soon after, Ben Garrucio breezed past Marcel Seip and provided an exquisite ball across the six-yard box which evaded everybody.

A second goal seemed inevitable, but the red and white would not be the team to celebrate it.

The Mariners found the net with their first meaningful incursion into the Heart area in first half stoppage time.

An innocuous long-ball found Mile Sterjoski, who nodded down to Matt Simon. He played in Kim Seung-yong and the Korean jinked inside Hoffman who over-committed horribly, and fired past Andrew Redmayne. Simon looked to foul Patrick Kisnorbo in the build up but the defenders' appeal would fall on deaf ears as Japanese referee Hiroyuki Kimura signalled for a goal.

The second period started much like the first. Both sides employed a high defensive line, thus crowding the midfield and time on the ball was at a premium. Wielaert's distribution has been a feature of Heart's continued improvement as his pass sliced the Mariners apart on 57 minutes. Williams went one-on-one with with Reddy - as the Heart man looked certain to score with no Mariners defender in sight. His effort was brilliantly saved by the Mariners custodian and the scores remained level. The wasteful Heart needed a lift, and Williams almost came to the rescue, only to be denied by Reddy again. Dugandzic found space on the right and his cross to the back post found the 25-year old who went agonisingly close to scoring if not for more goalkeeping heroics.

Harry Kewell was called upon shortly after with 62 minutes played, as v'ant Schip looked to give his side greater efficiency in the final third. Engelaar's deep cross found the forehead of Kewell who looked certain to score but Reddy rescued his side again. This miss would prove to be costly as substitute Bernie Ibini fired his side ahead.

Abject defending plagued the Heart in the first half of the season, and they succumbed to an innocuous ball from Liam Reddy yet again. Seip's flick-on found Ibini clear on goal, and the Shanghai East Asia-loanee found the far corner with a well-guided strike.

It was too easy for the Mariners who, in truth, were quite fortunate to be ahead. Fitzgerald played a nice give-and-go with Caceres as the Mariners found space on the break. Fitzgerald's initial shot was parried back into his path by Redmayne and under duress the 22-year old shot narrowly wide. The final five minutes saw Heart push desperately for an equalising goal, as they looked to keep a thread of hope for finals football in 2014.

Williams' lay-off found substitute Stefan Mauk with two minutes to play but the youngster failed to hit the target.

There was a familiar, sorry feeling from the home contingent as the final whistle blew. In a fixture where the Heart created enough chances to win the game two or three times over, they left empty handed. A result that summarises this campaign perfectly, if not quite tragically.

1-0 Heart fans are delirious after Orlando Engelaar's audacious effort from over the half-way line sails over the head of Mariners keeper Liam Reddy to hit the onion bag.

1-0 Orlando Engelaar stands tall after scoring one of the all-time classic goals in A-League history.

Brisbane Roar v Melbourne Heart — Fri Mar 28 Suncorp Stadium 8:00 PM

Roar Line Up

1.Michael THEO
2.Matthew SMITH (c)
3.Shane STEFANUTTO
7.Besart BERISHA
8.Steven LUSTICA
10.HENRIQUE
11.Liam MILLER
13.Jade NORTH
14.Diogo FERRIERA
15.James DONACHIE
16.Jean Carlos SOLORZANO
17.Matt McKAY
18.Luke BRATTAN
19.Jack HINGERT
20.Matthew ACTON (gk)
22.Thomas BROICH
23.Dimitri PETRATOS
26.Corey BROWN
Two to be omitted

Ins: 7.Besart BERISHA (returns from suspension), 13.Jade NORTH (returns from injury), 15.James DONACHIE (returns from injury), 26.Corey BROWN (returns from illness)

Outs: 27.Devante CLUT (Omitted), 28.Brandon BORRELLO (Omitted)

Unavailable: 5.Ivan FRANJIC (ankle – 1 week), 25.George LAMBADARDIS (knee - season)

Heart Schip Sails into Brisbane

Jarrod Ellis

Fresh from lifting the Premier's Plate last week as the best team in the regular season, Brisbane will kick off Round 25 by welcoming Melbourne Heart to Suncorp Stadium

Mike Mulvey's side wrapped up the Premiership with three rounds to play and to date are the only A-League side guaranteed a spot in the Finals.

The four week gap between meaningful matches should give Brisbane plenty of time to rest its key players. Given the Roar's paucity of fit defender's it certainly appears a blessing. Shane Stefanutto was forced into action at centre-back last Saturday and could very well be there once again this Friday with Jade North, James Donachie and Ivan Franjic carrying knocks.

Premiership goal-hero Luke Brattan is another that could do with a rest, the defensive midfielder playing through much of last game with a hip problem that left him limping.

Fielding a weakened side on Friday would give those players a chance to fully recover but there's been little indication that Mulvey believes in such practices. Noises out of the Brisbane camp to date have suggested that they don't want to become complacent, viewing the job as only half done. A drop in intensity, even if deliberate could prove costly with the finals just around the corner.

One man who has never struggled with a lack of intensity is Besart Berisha. Roar's star striker was a conspicuous absentee from last weekend's on field celebrations last Saturday, suspended for the match after his tackle on Sebastien Ryall. With that suspension over Berisha will return to the pitch for the Roar and with his career at Brisbane drawing to a close he'll have plenty of motivation come Saturday.

Berisha was absent the last time these two sides met, a 3-0 victory to Brisbane back in November last year. That result came under the ill-fated stewardship of John Aloisi and this occasion will mark the first time Brisbane have faced the Heart under the renewed tutelage of John van't Schip.

Under van't Schip Melbourne has looked another side but they must win if they're to keep any remaining finals hopes alive. Last week's 2-1 loss to Central Coast Mariners effectively ended the red half of Melbourne's finals dreams, Heart now needing to win all three of its matches and hope other results go their way.

That's a tall order in anyone's books and despite not wanting to give up on this season just yet John Van't Schip may well have one eye on next season already.

One Heart player who won't be present either next season or Saturday night will be Harry Kewell. Arguably Australia's greatest ever footballer Kewell announced his retirement on Wednesday in a move that's sure to overshadow Heart's preparation for the weekend.

Kewell's physical absence won't come as a shock to Melbourne, having played the majority of the season without him and instead will look to the likes of David Williams and Orlando Engelaar to overcome the newly crowned Premiers.

The Odds	Head-to-Head
Roar 1.57	Played 11
Draw 3.80	Roar 5
Heart 5.50	Heart 4
	Draw 2

Referee: Chris Beath

Radio Broadcast: ABC Grandstand Online/Mobile phone app. SBS Radio

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag #BRIvMHT

Kiss of Death
Brisbane 2-0 Heart

Heart Line Up

1.Andrew REDMAYNE (GK)
3.Robbie WIELAERT (C)
4.Orlando ENGELAAR
6.Patrick GERHARDT
7.Iain RAMSAY
8.Massimo MURDOCCA
13.Jonatan GERMANO
15.David WILLIAMS
16. Aziz BEHICH
17.Jason HOFFMAN
19.Benjamin GARUCCIO
20.Tando VELAPHI (GK)
21.Stefan MAUK
22.Nicholas KALMAR
23.Mate DUGANDZIC
24.Patrick KISNORBO
28. Paulo RETRE
One to be omitted

Ins: 16.Aziz BEHICH (promoted), 28. Paulo RETRE (promoted)

Outs: 10.Harry KEWELL (abdominal strain – 2 weeks)

Unavailable**: Nil**

CC Mariners v West Syd Wanderers — Sat Mar 29 Bluetongue Stdm 5:30 PM

Mariners Line Up

1.Justin PASFIELD (Gk)
3.Joshua ROSE
4.Marcel SEIP
5.Zachary ANDERSON
7.John HUTCHINSON (C)
8.Nick MONTGOMERY
9.Mitchell DUKE
11.Nick FITZGERALD
12.Liam REDDY (Gk)
15.Storm ROUX
17.Anthony CACERES
19.Mitchell DUKE
20.Bernie IBINI
21.Mile STERJOVSKI
25.Eddy BOSNAR
26.KIM Seung-yong
27.Isaka CERNAK
28.Glen TRIFIRO
Two to be omitted

Ins: 27.Isaka CERNAK (promoted), 28.Glen TRIFIRO (promoted)

Outs: Nil

Unavailable: 10.Marcos FLORES (knee – season), 13.Hayden MORTON (thigh – 1 week), 14.Michael MCGLINCHEY (on loan – Vegalta Sendai), 18.Michael NEILL (knee – season), 23 Adam KWASNIK (knee – season)

Asian Heavyweights Toe to Toe at Gosford

Adrian Deans

The Mariners and Wanderers are both doing well in Asia.

The Wanderers are doing well in terms of the table. The Mariners are doing well in slightly less tangible ways, but still doing well. Not least in the A-League.

It seems as though the enforced camp situation necessitated by travel to places like Seoul and Beijing is having a positive effect back in Australia. Phil Moss has even paid tribute to the inconvenience – labelling it a bonding experience for a club which is always at its best when expected to lose.

A month ago, the Wanderers would have been rusted on favourites to win this game, but despite two wins on the spin in Asia and a resounding victory last week at home to Perth, this looks like an even encounter. The Mariners have won their last two A-League matches and have done it with good shape and system. They will certainly test the Wanderers who have won only once away in their last six league matches.

My player to watch in this game is Matt Simon. A local of East Gosford, he started the season as new Socceroo Mitchell Duke's understudy, but these days is absolutely confirmed in the starting side (when the coach isn't rotating players for Asian duty). He changed the game when he came on last weekend because the headless chook Mariners had been unable to find an outlet up the park capable of holding possession until reinforcements arrived. All of a sudden, Kew Jaliens was taken out of the game and Caravella and Zadkovich were no longer receiving the ball in space in the Mariners' half.

I presume that was Mossy's instruction, and if so he certainly pulled the right rope with the Mariners reeling at that point.

Tony Popavic's side have somewhat recovered after a rough patch and, like the Mariners, they seem to have used their Asian campaign as a galvanising influence on the domestic scene.

All eyes will be on Tomi Juric to see whether he can continue to push for a seat on the plane to Brazil (I will be amazed if his team mate Spiranovic doesn't make it), and Aaron Mooy will also be desperate to win some late scrutiny from Ange Postecoglou after being on everyone's bolters list this time last year.

The coaches (of course) will not want their players thinking about Brazil, but how could they not? I predict a very tight match possibly affected by a range of international distractions.

Adrian Deans is the author of Mr Cleansheets and more recently Straight Jacket – published by High Horse Books and available in all good book stores. www.adriandeans.com

The Odds	Head-to-Head
Mariners 2.75	Played 6
Draw 3.30	Mariners 2
Wanderers 2.40	Wanderers 2
	Drawn 2

Strebre Delovski

Radio Broadcast: 92.5 ABC Central Coast, Online/Mobile phone app . Coast FM (Central Coast)

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag #CCMvWSW

Kiss of Death
Mariners 1-1 Wanderers

Wanderers Line Up

1.Ante COVIC (gk)
2.Shannon COLE
4.Nikolai TOPOR-STANLEY
5.Michael BEAUCHAMP (c)
6.Jerome POLENZ
7.Labinot HALITI
8.Mateo POLJAK
9.Tomi JURIC
10.Aaron MOOY
11.Brendon SANTALAB
13.Matthew SPIRANOVIC
14.Kwabena APPIAH
17.Youssouf HERSI
18.Iacopo LA ROCCA
19.Mark BRIDGE
20.Jerrad TYSON (gk)
21.Shinji ONO
22. Dean HEFFERNAN
Two to be omitted

Ins: 5.Michael BEAUCHAMP (promoted), 7.Labinot HALITI (promoted)

Outs: Nil

Unavailable: 3.Adam D'APUZZO (groin – 2 weeks), 12.Tahj MINNIECON (hip – indefinite), 34.Golgol MEBRAHTU (knee – indefinite)

Melbourne Victory v Sydney FC

Sat Mar 29 AAMI Park 7:30 PM

Victory Line Up

1.Nathan COE (gk)
2.Pablo CONTRERAS
3.Adama TRAORE
4.Nick ANSELL
5.Mark MILLIGAN (C)
7.Gui FINKLER
9.Kosta BARBAROUSES
10.Archie THOMPSON
14.James TROISI
16.Rashid MAHAZI
17.James JEGGO
20.Lawrence THOMAS (gk)
21.Tom ROGIC
22.Jesse MAKAROUNAS
23.Adrian LEIJER
24.Scott GALLOWAY
25.Jason GERIA
31.Dylan MURNANE
Two to be omitted

Ins: 2.Pablo CONTRERAS (returns from injury), 3.Adama TRAORE (returns from injury), 4.Nick ANSELL (returns from injury)

Outs: 6.Leigh BROXHAM (suspension – 1 week)

Unavailable: Nil

Melbourne Looking to Avenge Loss

Andrew Bishara

Already twice this season, Sydney FC has claimed bragging rights in probably the biggest derby in Australia.

It defeated the Melbourne Victory 3-2 in late November in a thrilling contest, despite playing with only 10 men. On Australia day, it showed it was the top dog again, by crushing the Victory 5-0.

However, those victories seem be the only major highlights in a rather disappointing season for the Sky Blues. It sits seventh on the ladder, one goal shy of the top six and missing out of the finals is a very real chance.

Victory is on the same level, having endured a rather inconsistent season by their lofty standards. It currently sits third on the ladder, only four points clear of Sydney with finals looking like a shoe-in, barring some massive end-of-season capitulation.

The difference is that the Victory has had to battle the demands of the Asian Champions League and fatigue is clearly a factor now.

Last Saturday night's game against the Roar, the players looking tired late in the second half and were unlucky to lose 1-0. However, credit must be given to the Victory for hauling itself out of the rut it was in a month ago and push itself in top-two contention.

Captain Mark Milligan said the games were taking its toll on the players.

"We've had a very heavy workload over the last few weeks and the boys have dealt with it well," he said.

"But ultimately if you're playing that many games and travelling there are a few little things that suffer in your game."

Milligan continued to say that the Victory have to regroup against the Sky Blues, but stated that motivation isn't a problem.

"It's not spoken about a lot but deep down, that last result against Sydney, the boys still feel it.

"It's still in the back of our minds and we want to make amends for that not just for us but our fans."

Victory though will be without Leigh Broxham, who is suspended, but will have a full squad to choose from.

Sydney should have Alessandro Del Piero back in time for the game, but given his latest injury concerns, it will be touch-and-go.

However, in a bout of good news for the Sky Blues defender Sasa Ognenovski has resigned for the club.

There is no doubting this derby is huge (we say this about all derbies), but such is a tight race for the finals, any sort of dropped points can be costly.

Victory is in with a firm shout to grab a top two finish, while Sydney knows that a bad result can see its finals dreams slip away. However it depends which Sydney turns up: the good functional side or the tattered mess.

Regardless, the Blue Boys from Melbourne will enjoy the week off, and has over recent weeks played with a ruthlessness it has been missing most of the season. Victory to avenge its losses.

The Odds	Head-to-Head
Victory 1.91 Draw 3.50 Sydney FC 3.60	Played 29 Victory 9 Sydney FC 7 Drawn 13

Referee: Jarred Gillett

Radio Broadcast: ABC Grandstand Online/Mobile phone app

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag - #MVCvSYD #Unite

Kiss of Death
Victory 2-0 Sydney FC

Sydney FC Line Up

1.Ivan NECEVSKI (gk)
2.Seb RYALL
5.Matt JURMAN
6.Nikola PETKOVIC
9.Corey GAMEIRO
10.Alessandro DEL PIERO (c)
11.Richard GARCIA
13.Sasa OGNENOVSK
16.Joel CHIANESE
17.Terry ANTONIS
18.Peter TRIANTIS
20.Vedran JANJETOVIC (gk)
21.Milos DIMITRIJEVIC
22.Ali ABBAS
24.Hagi GLIGOR
28.Matt THOMPSON
29.Alec UROSEVSKI
34.Aaron CALVER
Two to be omitted

Ins: 18.Peter TRIANTIS (promoted), 21.Milos DIMITRIJEVIC (promoted).

Outs: Nil

Unavailable: Rhyan GRANT (knee – season), Pedj BOJIC (back – season), Ranko DESPOTOVIC (knee – 2 weeks), Terry McFLYNN (knee – 2 weeks)

Wellington Phoenix v Adelaide United

Sun Mar 30 Westpac Stdm 1:00 PM

Phoenix Line Up

1.Glen MOSS (GK)
2.Manny MUSCAT
5.Michael BOXALL
9.Kenny CUNNINGHAM
10.Stein HUYSEGEMS
11.Jeremy BROCKIE
12.Tyler BOYD
14.Alex RUFER
15.Jason HICKS
17.Vince LIA
18.Ben SIGMUND
19.Hamish WATSON
20.Lewis ITALIANO (GK)
21.Carlos HERNANDEZ
22.Andrew DURANTE (c)
23.Matthew RIDENTON
24.Roy KRISHNA
25.Shaun TIMMINS
Two to be omitted

In: 14.Alex RUFER (promoted), 18.Ben SIGMUND (returns from suspension), 21.Carlos HERNANDEZ (returns from injury)...
Out: Luke ADAMS (omitted).
Unavailable: 3.Reece CAIRA (fractured cheekbone 6-8 weeks), 6.Josh BRINDELL-SOUTH (ankle injury 4-6 weeks), 7.Leo BERTOS (groin injury (2 to 3 weeks), 8.Paul IFILL (ruptured Achilles, season), 13.Albert RIERA (groin injury, season), 6.Louis FENTON (shoulder injury, season).

Season hangs in the balance for Phoenix

Joe Gallagher

Wellington Phoenix's season has reached breaking point and their finals hopes could be extinguished by the end of this round.

Ernie Merrick's side sit four points outside the top six and will need to hope that results elsewhere in the A-League go their way if their bid to make the playoffs is to be successful.

The Phoenix will have a keen eye on fixtures at AAMI Park and NIB Stadium this weekend but need to make sure of their end when Adelaide United come to town on Sunday afternoon.

The Reds are one of three teams to knock five past the New Zealanders in the past month, joining Melbourne Heart and - most recently - Newcastle Jets as sides to dish out a thrashing agains the Phoenix.

Merrick knows that all losses are losses, but results like that - not least three in two months - cannot be passed off as blips. Not even he who - justifiably - defended Wellington's poor start to the season could describe the past few weeks as a speed bump.

The results against the Jets, Heart and United have also put Wellington on the back foot in terms of goal difference, something that could just be crucial as the season approaches its climax.

In truth, it would be unjust for the Phoenix to make the playoffs given the way they have performed this season. Despite a mid-season resurgence, Merrick's side have struggled to break down their opposition all campaign, and when they have, they've failed to put away their chances.

On the flip side, Josep Gombau's squad could all but guarantee their spot in the finals with victory on Sunday. Though the Reds could still finish outside the six, they've not yet ruled out finishing in the top two, eying up the Western Sydney Wanderers and a run at becoming regular season runners-up.

Like their hosts this weekend, Adelaide's mid-season surge has faded of late, but they remain a threat to any defence with the likes of Sergio Cirio, Jeronimo Neumann and Fabio Ferreira (the trio have contributed 25 goals this term) in their ranks.

What Wellington would do for such firepower - 10-goal hero Stein Huysegems has gone missing in recent weeks and his supply has clearly suffered from the ongoing absence of star Costa Rican midfielder Carlos Hernandez.

Wellington's backline will undergo yet another re-shuffle, with Ben Sigmund returning from suspension and Manny Muscat placed back into the midfield.

It has been 'must win' territory for the Phoenix for a number of weeks but this week it's critical. Failure to win on Sunday and Wellington will not feature in the post-season. Three points and they could be back in the hunt.

They end the season away at Sydney FC (a fellow playoff chaser) and by hosting the in-form Melbourne Victory.

Adelaide United finish their campaign hosting Melbourne Heart before rounding out the regular season away at Newcastle Jets.

The Odds	Head-to-Head
Phoenix 2.70 Draw 3.40 Adelaide 2.40	Played 21 Phoenix 5 Adelaide 10 Drawn 6

Referee: Peter Green

Radio Broadcast: ABC Grandstand Online/Mobile phone app.

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag - #WELvADL

Kiss of Death
Phoenix 1-1 Adelaide

Adelaide Utd Line Up

1.Eugene GALEKOVIC (gk) (c)
2.Michael MARRONE
3.Nigel BOOGAARD
5.Osama MALIK
7.JERONIMO
8.ISAIAS
9.Sergio CIRIO
10.Marcelo CARRUSCA
11.Bruce DJITE
14.Cameron WATSON
17.Awer MABIL
18.Michael ZULLO
20.Paul IZZO (gk)
21.Tarek ELRICH
22.Fabio FERREIRA
23.Jordan ELSEY
25.Ryan KITTO (promoted)
32.Nathan KONSTANDOPOULOS
Two to be omitted

Ins: 25.Ryan KITTO (promoted), 32.Nathan KONSTANDOPOULOS (promoted)

Outs: 4.Jon McKAIN (quad 1 – 2 weeks)

Unavailable: 6.CASSIO (hamstring tendon – indefinite)

Catch LIVE updates of all the games and action pics on Goal! Weekly's facebook & Twitter pages

Perth Glory v Newcastle Jets

Sun Mar 30 NIB stadium 5:00 PM

Glory Line Up

2.Jack CLISBY
3. Brandon O'NEILL
4. Ryan EDWARDS
5. Rostyn GRIFFITHS
7. Jacob BURNS (c)
8. Nebojsa MARINKOVIC
10. Jamie MACLAREN
14. Steven McGARRY
16.Sidnei SCIOLA MORAES
17. Chris HAROLD
18. Jack DUNCAN(GK)
19. Josh RISDON
24. Matthew DAVIES
23. Michael THWAITE
25. Riley WOODCOCK
28. Darvydas SERNAS
36. William GALLAS
39. Luke RADONICH (GK)
Two to be omitted

Ins: 16.Sidnei SCIOLA MORAES (promoted), 25. Riley WOODCOCK (promoted)

Outs: None

Unavailable: Travis DODD (knee - indefinite), Scott JAMIESON (Achilles - indefinite), Shane SMELTZ (groin- 1 week)

Coming in with confidence

Peter Simcox

Newcastle Jets will look to continue their good form when they head to Western Australia to take on Perth Glory in week 24 of the Hyundai A-League at the nib Stadium on Sunday afternoon.

The Jets are fresh off a 5-0 thrashing of Wellington Phoenix last week, a win that moved them into the play-off spot ahead of Sydney FC, but they are yet to win in the West since the inaugural season, when Vaughan Coveny scored in a 1-0 win.

Assistant Coach and former Perth Glory defender Craig Deans, knows Sunday's clash will be tough despite the home side not winning in their last 10 games, but is confident they can come away with the win.

"Last weekend's game is done, we enjoyed it over the weekend, but now we're back in training and focused on the game against Perth. The fact that we scored five goals and kept a clean sheet as well is very good for the whole group," he said

"We'll go to Perth this weekend knowing what we're going to come up against and what we want to do.

"I think it's important for us to start the game as well as we did last weekend and if we can get the first goal and get it early, it will be a big boost to our confidence and knock them back a bit.

"I know the crowd over there are starting to get a bit restless, so I think the quicker we can get on top in the game and put them under some pressure, the better."

Jets coach Clayton Zane will have a few selection headaches going into the game, with a full squad to choose from, and Michael Bridges pushing for a starting role, after scoring off the bench last week.

The 3-0 defeat at the hands of Western Sydney Wanderers last week, ended the Glory's slim finals hopes, but they will be looking to give their supporters three points to end a 10 game streak without a win. They do have a great record against the Jets, and are unbeaten in 11 home matches against them in the A-League, winning the last six.

Their last meeting at the nib Stadium was in round 11 last season. Travis Dodd gave the Glory the lead in first half stoppage time and doubled their advantage four minutes into the second half. The points were made safe on 75 minutes, with Shane Smeltz converting from the penalty spot.

Glory young defender Matthew Davies has impressed in his first season. The 19-year-old forced his way into the Glory starting line-up after impressing in the Foxtel National Youth League side at the start of the season, and he believes they cannot afford to dwell on their poor run.

"Looking forward we just have to pick ourselves up and not feel sorry for ourselves. We'll try and finish off the season with some good results and look to rebuild some belief," he said.

He knows the Jets are in good form, but he is confident the Glory can make it difficult for them.

"It's a massive ask, but we won't make it easy for them to come and get a result at our home ground."

Interim Glory Coach Kenny Lowe will be hoping William Gallas has shaken off his injury, The French defender is still under an injury cloud, has suffering a lower leg injury late in last week's defeat, but they will hope to have the services of striker Shane Smelz, who missed last week with injury.

The Odds	Head-to-Head
Glory 2.87 Draw 3.30 Jets 2.30	Played 26 Glory 14 Jets 6 Drawn 6

Referee: Kris Griffiths-Jones

Radio Broadcast: 1233 ABC Newcastle, 720 ABC Perth and ABC Local Radio WA, Grandstand Digital Online/Mobile phone app. Sport FM (Perth)

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag #PERvNEW

Kiss of Death
Glory 2-1 Jets

Jets Line Up

1.Mark BIRIGHITTI (gk)
3.Taylor REGAN
4.Kew JALIENS
5.Ben KANTAROVSKI
6.Zenon CARAVELLA
8.Ruben ZADKOVICH (c)
9.Emile HESKEY
11.Craig GOODWIN
14.Josh MITCHELL
15.Josh BRILLANTE
16.Jacob PEPPER
19.Michael BRIDGES
21.Sam GALLAWAY
20.Ben KENNEDY (gk)
22.Adam TAGGART
23.David CARNEY
24.Mitch OXBORROW
29.Joel GRIFFITHS
Two to be omitted

Ins: 3.Taylor REGAN (promoted), 16.Jacob PEPPER (promoted).

Outs: Nil.

Unavailable: 2.Scott NEVILLE (knee injury – long term) 25.Mitch COOPER (knee injury – long term).

AL's WEEKLY TAKE

Despite the sadness of his retirement, Harry Kewell should be commended not just for the stellar, eventful career he's had and the joy given to us Oz football fans along the journey, but for having the self-respect and good sense to bow out on his terms at this time - a stark contrast to too many greats across all codes who feel they can cheat Father Time and play on till they need walking frames to get by...all joking aside however, it is an example that many sportspeople in the twilight of their careers should follow - Thanks for the memories, H!

The Asian Cup draw was announced overnight and regardless of who the Socceroos were grouped with, it falls to all of us football fans Australia-wide to throw our support behind the event next year - given there are still a few high-profile skeptics/naysayers belittling the merits of staging the Cup here, we need to get behind it safe in the knowledge that the influx of competing-nation supporters/tourists during the event will most certainly do their part!

BY ALVARO RODRIGUEZ

Round 25: ASK THE EXPERTS

THE VERDICT Roar - 11 Heart - 1 - Draw - 3 | Phoenix - 3 Adelaide - 8 Draw - 4 | Mariners - 5 Wanderers - 3 Draw - 7 | Victory - 12 Sydney FC - 2 Draw - 1 | Glory - 5 Jets - 7 Draw - 3

Santo Cilauro 57
Roar
Draw
CCM
Victory
Glory
Last week: 4

Working Dog Productions

George Donikian 53
Draw
Adelaide
Draw
Victory
Jets
Last week: 4

Media Mogul

George Calombaris 59
Brisbane Roar
Adelaide United
Draw
Melbourne Victory
Newcastle Jets
Last week: 3

No.1 Victory ticket holder

Eddie Krncevic 33
Roar
Draw
Draw
Victory
Glory
Last week: 1

Former Socceroo

John Perin 51
Brisbane
Adelaide
Draw
Victory
Draw
Last week: 4

Hall of Fame Socceroo

Andy Harper 48
Roar
Adelaide
Wanderes
Victory
Jets
Last week: 4

NSL Champ / Fox Sports

Ross Alatsas 61
Roar
Phoenix
Mariners
Victory
Glory
Last week: 4

GM Greek Media Group

Jimmy Campbell 56
Roar
Adelaide
Mariners
Victory
Jets
Last week: 2

Former Socceroo

George Campbell 55
Heart
Adelaide
Draw
Sydney
Perth
Last week: 2

Sth Melb & NSL Legend

Jimmy Rooney 43
Draw
Draw
Mariners
Victory
Draw
Last week: 1

World Cup '74 Socceroo

Roger Sleeman 55
Roar
Adelaide
Wanderers
Victory
Jets
Last week: 4

Reigning Tipping Champ

John Doyle 47
Roar
Draw
Wanderers
Sydney
Jets
Last week: 5

Original Captain Socceroo

Peter Katholos 56
Roar
Phoenix
Mariners
Victory
Glory
Last week: 4

Former Socceroo

Steve Blair 51
Roar
Adelaide
Draw
Victory
Jets
Last week: 4

Former Socceroo

Kiss Of Death 52
Roar
Draw
Victory
Draw
Glory
Last week: 4

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Top Opta Facts

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Round 25

Brisbane Roar v Melbourne Heart

Brisbane Roar have only lost one of their previous six home league meetings with Melbourne Heart (W4 D1).

Melbourne Heart have never kept a clean sheet away to Brisbane Roar in the A-League.

Henrique Silva (Brisbane Roar recorded a brace the last time these sides met at the Suncorp Stadium in the A-League.

Melbourne Heart have one win in their last 24 A-League matches on the road (D5 L18).

Brisbane Roar are unbeaten in four league games, the longest current run in the A-League (W3 D1).

Melbourne Heart have recorded just one away win this season, no side has won fewer.

Thomas Broich (Brisbane Roar) has recorded 10 assists this term; a league-high.

The hosts have the best passing accuracy in the A-League this season (83.3%).

Wellington Phoenix v Adelaide United

Wellington Phoenix have one win in five league games against Adelaide United (D1 L3).

Adelaide United have gone seven A-League visits to Wellington Phoenix without a win (D4 L3).

Awer Mabil (Adelaide United) has scored a 90th minute goal in his last two A-League appearances against Wellington Phoenix.

Wellington Phoenix have conceded in each of their last nine league games, their worst run all season.

Only Brisbane Roar's Luke Brattan (60) has recorded more interceptions this season than Wellington Phoenix duo Andrew Durante and Manny Muscat (both 59).

Adelaide United average 57.9% this season for possession, only Brisbane Roar have managed a better share (59%).

Wellington Phoenix are without a win in four league games, conceding 13 goals over that period (D2 L2).

Only Perth Glory (13) have managed fewer points in the last 10 home games than Wellington Phoenix (14 points).

CC Mariners v West Syd Wanderers

Central Coast Mariners have only registered one win in four A-League matches (incl. Play offs, D1 L2).

Western Sydney Wanderers are yet to claim victory away at Central Coast Mariners in the A-League (D1 L1).

Tomi Juric (Western Sydney Wanderers) has scored in successive appearances against Central Coast Mariners in the A-League.

Central Coast Mariners have gone eight league games without keeping a clean sheet; their longest wait all season.

Central Coast Mariners have only drawn one match in their last nine at home (W6 L2).

Western Sydney Wanderers have managed just one win in their last six on the road in the league (D2 L3).

Western Sydney Wanderers have registered more clean sheets than any other side this season (10).

Of players to have scored twice this season, only Brisbane Roar's Besart Berisha (104.7) has a better minutes per goal ratio than Western Sydney Wanderers' Tomi Juric (116.7).

Melbourne Victory v Sydney FC

Melbourne Victory have registered just two wins in nine A-League games against Sydney (D4 L3).

Sydney have won back-to-back league matches against Melbourne Victory, scoring eight goals in the process.

Sydney's Alessandro Del Piero has scored three goals in his last two appearances against Melbourne Victory.

Six of the last eight goals recorded by Sydney in league games against Melbourne Victory have arrived in the first half.

Melbourne Victory have gone 14 matches without a clean sheet; a current league-high.

Sydney have scored in each of their last five on the road, the best current run.

Leigh Broxham (Melbourne Victory) has blocked more opposition shots than any player this campaign (22).

Melbourne Victory have attempted just 228 crosses from open play this season; a league-low.

Perth Glory v Newcastle Jets

Perth Glory are unbeaten in 11 home matches to Newcastle Jets in the A-League, winning the last six.

Newcastle Jets have mustered just one goal over their last four league meetings with Perth Glory.

League top-scorer Adam Taggart (13 goals) has bagged four goals in his last four A-League appearances.

Perth Glory are without a win in their last 10 league matches, currently the longest wait in the division (D3 L7).

Newcastle Jets have recorded three clean sheets in their last four league matches.

Emile Heskey (Newcastle Jets) comes into this game having scored his first goal in the A-league since February 2013, during the previous matchday.

Perth Glory have faced more shots than any other side in the A-League (373).

Perth Glory have mustered just two goals over their last four home games in league competition.

RAISING MY OPINION

Andre Zwan in NZ

Stein Deserves New Deal

Wellington Phoenix should offer Stein Huysegems a two year deal. They simply cannot afford to lose a player of his quality.
That's my message to the hierarchy at Nix.

The former Belgian international is one of the leading goalscorers in the A-League. He has a high workrate and is good on and off the ball. Furthermore Huysegems has developed a good understanding with Kenny Cunningham and Carlos Hernandez. And it is work in progress with newcomer Roy Krishna who scored against Melbourne Heart the previous week. Add to this strike potential the names of Jeremy Brockie and Paul Ifill and one can only look ahead with confidence to the 2014-2015 season.

Will Phoenix make the play-offs? As one pundit stated they are currently on life support. Adelaide United might switch off that life support at the Cake Tin this Sunday.

The South Australians are running in top gear and cross the Tasman knowing they beat the Nix 5-1 last month. That leaves the Wellington team with another home game against Melbourne Victory whom they beat 5-0 in January and an away match against Sydney on April 6.

It's a tough call as Phoenix has a mile-long injury list. Out of the 11 starters against Jets last week, only five players had completed preseason. Coach Ernie Merrick had to improvise.

To cover the injuries Merrick had to make emergency signings from clubs in the local ASB Premier League. Players like Shaun Timmins, Josh Brindell-South and Matthew Ridenton.

It paid dividends as they discovered a gem in 26-year-old Krishna who played for Waitakere and Auckland City.

The Fijian international and Van Huysegems linked well and this combo could have earned Phoenix a few goals against Jets had it not been for the Jets goalkeeper.

The last time there was a miracle there was a bright star in the sky. I can't see it now. Even so, Phoenix did not embarrass themselves this season. Under Merrick, they produced good football. Unlike past seasons, Phoenix attacked and shook off the defensive constraints imposed on them in previous years.

They are no longer cellar dwellers. They beat teams like Melbourne Victory. Melbourne Heart, West Sydney Wanderers and Sydney FC. Had they not suffered such a spate of injuries, they would have been in the play-offs. They can hold their heads high.

Phoenix defence leaked unnecessary goals and requires attention. Up front players wanted to "walk" the ball into goal instead of shooting on sight. Another centreback and a playmaker in the midfield will give Phoenix the platform for success next season.

Phoenix Injury List

Key Wellington Phoenix players on injured list:
- Reece Caira, fractured cheekbone- out for the season
- Josh Brindell-South, ankle injury – out for 5-6 weeks
- Leo Bertos, groin injury- out for the season
- Paul Ifill, snapped Achilles- out for the season
- Albert Riera, groin and lower abdominal injury- out for the season
- Louis Fenton, broken collarbone – out for the season
- Carlos Herhandez, quad injury- out for 3-4 weeks.

All Whites News

From a national viewpoint, it appears as if the All Whites will be in demand for warm-up games against World Cup qualifiers in Asia and South America. The New Zealand team could face Chile who are in the same group as Australia.

As always, the viability of any fixture depends on the financial equation, with a match fee needed to offset the substantial costs involved in assembling the team from around the globe. It is also dependent on the All Whites fielding a strong line-up, as there would be little point in arranging such a game without the involvement of many of the top players.

Players have been vocal recently in expressing their desire for more games: "It all comes down to how many times we can get together," said All Whites goalkeeper Glen Moss. "The key is to get games and especially quality games like the one against Japan," he said.

The All Whites are still searching for a coach and they need to put a strategy in place for the 2017 Confederations Cup and 2018 World Cup, both in Russia. There are new faces at the helm of New Zealand football and hopefully they will take the steps to improve the planning and logistics of such campaigns.

Meanwhile, NZF hopes to lock in at least two, hopefully three, more fixtures for the All Whites before the end of the year.

There are Fifa windows during September 1-9, October 6-14 and November 10-18 and it is expected the All Whites will play one game on these shores as well as one away fixture during that time.

The opposition is likely to be Asian, though there is a possibility of a rare match against a European team. My preference would be a game against our cousins across the Tasman – Australia.

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PHOTOS & GRAPHICS : ANITA MILAS

GOAL! WEEKLY

NICK ANSELL 4

MELBOURNE Victory F.C.

Photos: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

GOAL
WEEKLY
BRISBANE ROAR FC
Premiers Plate Winners 2013/14
PHOTO: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Surprises galore in Dockerty Cup

By Vic Brincat

Round four of the Dockerty Cup produced plenty of upset results, with some outstanding results coming from lower division clubs. It was a chance for the minnows to pit their enthusiasm and drive against the more talented higher ranking opponents. As happens so often in cup football results did not go as expected.

One of the biggest upset was the defeat of NPL 1 side Box Hill United to state league two side North Sunshine Eagles. It was the Eagles who triumphed 5-4 on penalties after the two sides drew 2-2.

Another notable upset came from state league one side Preston Lions who added NPL1 side North Geelong Warriors scalp to their list on their way to round five. The Lions had previously defeated another NPL1 side Dandenong City.

State league three side Elwood City can be proud of their fine upset 1-0 win over NPL1 side Brunswick City. State league side Eltham Redbacks were defeated 4-2 by state league one side Fawkner Blues, but it could have been a different story had Eltham taken their early chances.

The biggest major boil over was caused by state league one side South Springvale who defeated NPL Pascoe Vale 1-0.

Dockerty Cup action from South Melbourne's 1-0 win against Sunshine George Cross. Photo: CINDY NITSOS

NPL sides who made it to the next round are Hume City, easy 5-1 winner over Casey Comets, South Melbourne 1-0 winner over Sunshine George Cross courtesy of a late penalty goal, Bentleigh Greens who easily conquered St. Kilda 3-0, as well as Green Gully, Werribee City, Dandenong Thunder, and Northcote City who had wins over fellow NPL sides Ballarat, Oakleigh Cannons, Heidelberg United and Port Melbourne respectively.

Easy wins were recorded by Keilor Park who punished Sydenham 4-0, Westvale trounced Nunawading 7-2, Cairnlea defeated St. Kevin's Old Boys a 5-1, Richmond and Melbourne Knights were too good for Old Scotch and Whittlesea Ranges winning 4-0 respectively and Avondale Heights easily accounting for Twin City Wanderers 5-1.

Close matches that could have gone either way were the Northern Roosters - Whittlsea United match that United snatched 1-0, Sunbury United's 2-1 win over Malvern City, Beaumaris, Doveton and Berwick City edging out Heidelberg Stars, North Caulfield and Western Suburbs 3-2 respectively, St. Albans 2-1 winners over Clifton Hill, Bulleen Lions 3-1 over Moreland City, Moreland Zebras getting home 1-0 over Kingston City. Game between Plenty Valley United Vs Eastern Lions was played on Tuesday night and produced seven goals with the Lions getting home 4-3.

Two other matches went into extra time and were decided on penalty kicks. Skye United edged out Melbourne University 4-2 on penalties after their game ended 1-1 aet. Frankston Pines did likewise against Corio after a final score of 2-2.

Dockerty Cup - Rd 4

Sydenham Park 0 Keilor Park 4
Skye United 1 (4) Melb Uni 1 (2)
Skye Utd wins on pens
Hume City 5 Casey Comets 0
Sunshine George Cross 0 Sth Melb 1
Brunswick City 0 Elwood City 1
N Geelong Warriors 0 Preston Lions 2
Fawkner Blues 4 Eltham Redbacks 2
Northern Roosters 0 Whittlesea Utd 1
Malvern City 1 Sunbury United 2
Corio SC 2 (2) Frankston Pines FC 2 (4)
Pines wins on pens
Bentliegh Greens 3 St Kilda 0
Beaumaris 3 Heidelberg Stars 2
Westvale 7 Nunawading City 2
FC Clifton Hill 1 St Albans Saints 2
Cairnlea 5 St Kevins Old Boys 1
Pascoe Vale 0 South Springvale 1
Old Scotch 0 Richmond 4
Green Gully 2 Ballarat Red Devils 1
Bulleen Lions 3 Moreland City 1
Box Hill United 2 (4) North Sunshine Eagles 2 (5) aet pens
Oakleigh Cannons 1 Werribee City 2
Berwick City 3 Western Suburbs 2
Portt Melbourne 0 Northcote City 3
Melb Knights 4 Whittlesea Ranges 0
Dandenong Thun 2 Heidelberg U 1
Kingston City 0 Moreland Zebras 1
Doveton 3 North Caulfield 2
Twin City Wanderers 1 Avondale Heights 5

Still to be played:
Noble Park United Vs Mornington
Wednesday 2 April 8.00pm

Springvale White Eagles Vs Altona Magic Wednesday 2 April 8.00pm

Southern Stars Vs Cobram Victory
Tuesday 15 April 7.30pm

Round 5

Avondale Heights v St Albans Saints
Melbourne Knights v Noble Park/ Mornington
Southern Stars/Cobram Victory v Sunbury United
South Springvale v Cairnlea
Bulleen Lions v Westvale
Keilor Park v Plenty Valley/Eastern Lions
Preston Lions v Werribee City
Bentleigh Greens v Moreland Zebras
Dandenong Thunder v Doveton
Frankston Pines v Green Gully
Elwood City v Northcote City
Hume City v Skye United
Fawkner Blues v Beaumaris
Whittlesea United v Springvale White Eagles/Altona Magic
Richmond V North Sunshine
Berwick City v South Melbourne

NPLV - Round 2

28/03/2014 8:30PM **Pascoe Vale V Melb Knights** Hosken Res
28/03/2014 8:30PM **Port Melb Sharks V South Melb** JL Murphy Res
28/03/2014 8:30PM **Oakleigh Cannons V Heidelberg Utd** Jack Edwards Res
29/03/2014 7:00PM **Dandenong Thunder V Green Gully** George Andrews Res
29/03/2014 6:30PM **Goulburn Valley Suns V Ballarat Red Devils** McEwan Res
30/03/2014 3:00PM **Northcote City V Bentleigh Greens** John Cain Memorial
30/03/2014 3:00PM **Werribee City V Hume City** Galvin Reserve

NPLV1 - Round 2

28/03/2014 8:30 PM **Richmond v Springvale White Eagles** Kevin Bartlett Reserve
29/03/2014 3:00 PM **Avondale Heights v Sunshine George Cross** Avondale Heights Reserve
29/03/2014 6:00 PM **Whittlesea Ranges v FC Bendigo** Epping Stadium
29/03/2014 3:00 PM **Brunswick City v Dandenong City** Dunstan Reserve
29/03/2014 3:00 PM **North Geelong Warriors v Box Hill United** Elcho Park
30/03/2014 3:00 PM **Moreland Zebras v Kingston City** De Chene Reserve
30/03/2014 3:00 PM **St Albans Saints v FC Bulleen Lions** Churchill Reserve

2014 Victory League season launched in Tasmania

David Gallop (FFA CEO), Ian Robson (Melbourne Victory CEO) and Richard Welsh (FFT CEO) with the eight Victory League club captains at the launch of the 2014 Victory League season in Tasmania. Photo by Walter Pless

Round One

Friday 28 MARCH
Glenorchy Knights v South Hobart
KO 8PM KGV Football Park

Saturday 29 March
Tilford Zebras v Devonport Strikers
KO 4.30PM KGV Football Park

Saturday 29 March
Olympic warriors v Kingsborough United
KO 7pm KGV Football Park

Saturday 29 March
Launceston City v Northern Rangers
KO 6PM Mitsubiishi Park

VICTORY LEAGUE

Walter Pless

David Gallop, CEO of Football Federation Australia, and Melbourne Victory CEO Ian Robson, a Tasmanian, were in Hobart today to launch the second season of the Victory League State-wide competition.

Speaking at the launch, Gallop said the Victory League had demonstrated the power of the National Premier Leagues competition.

"We look forward to seeing the Victory League kick back into action again in 2014 and once again show Tasmanian crowds the beautiful game that is football," Gallop said.

"It's terrific to be in Tasmania for the launch of the 2014 Victory League.

"The Victory League is one of eight of our exciting National Premier Leagues competitions across the country and, as such, the Victory League forms an integral part of the Australian football landscape and the feeding pool of talented players to the A-League.

"2013 was a great year for football in Tasmania, with some historic moments.

"Victory League club South Hobart reached the final, showing the power of the National Premier Leagues competition, seeing the country hone in on Tasmania for a national final, giving Tasmanian football a chance to match themselves against others from around the country."

Robson, the Melbourne Victory CEO who replaced Richard Wilson, said his club was thrilled with the success of the league in its first year and was proud to support the Victory League as it continued to raise the bar for Tasmanian football.

"Our commitment to Tasmania remains strong and we were thrilled to be part of the Victory League's overwhelming success in its first season," Robson said.

The Victory League averaged attendances of 330 spectators per match in 2013, including a maximum crowd of 1200.

"We saw unprecedented media coverage, great attendances and some high quality football throughout last season and expect the league to reach even greater heights in 2014," Robson said.

"As the Victory League grows, we'll no doubt see an increase in the standard of talent on display, which we hope will lead to some young players earning A-League contracts in the not-too-distant future, like Launceston-born goalkeeper Jerrad Tyson at Western Sydney Wanderers FC.

Football Federation Tasmania CEO Richard Welsh said FFT were excited by the prospect of the State-wide league's second season.

"In 2013, we set a standard for what football can be in this state," Welsh said.

"This year, the clubs and FFT are looking to lift the bar even further."

The 2014 Victory League program is an enticing one with four double-headers and major feature matches on Anzac Day and Good Friday.

"The off-season saw some interesting player movements and the birth of some new rivalries to further add spice to the league," Welsh said.

"Working with eight clubs, we've implemented a number of new initiatives for 2014, which will give fans a closer experience to the world game and will see some truly exciting football in Tasmania."

The Victory League launch included the viewing of a new promotional video for the league and the unveiling of the eight clubs' home-and-away strips.

Some new digital initiatives were also announced, including a new dedicated Victory League website, Victory League Radio, which is an on-line radio channel, and a regular football program called "Tassie's Football Fix", featuring hosts Damian Gill and Mercury football reporter Alex Luttrell, to be housed on news.com.au and FFT's YouTube channel.

Victory League action kicks off next Friday, 28 March 2014, when Glenorchy Knights host reigning champions South Hobart at 8pm at KGV Park.

The following day, there is a double-header at KGV Park, with Tilford Zebras taking on Devonport City at 4.30pm and Olympia Warriors meeting Kingborough Lions United immediately after.

Gallop also said there were no immediate plans for Tasmania to have an A-League side, while Robson said the decision not to have Melbourne Victory play a competitive A-League match in Tasmania last year was a commercial one and resulted from low attendances at A-League matches in Tasmania.

Harry Kewell: Star quality

By Roy Hay

Harry Kewell is bringing down the curtain on a stellar career at the end of the current A-League season. It is a pity that he could not make it to what would be his third World Cup in succession, but the body which has inhibited him in the latter stages of his career will not let him deliver the kind of consistent performances demanded by Socceroo coach Ange Postecoglou.

Even Melbourne Heart must have been reluctant to offer a new contract, despite the impact he has had on the players around him since he joined the club. So the time is right for one of our all-time greats to step aside.

He was born in Smithfield in New South Wales of English parents. I first saw him play at Kim Reserve in 1994 with the New South Wales Under-15s who won the national championships beating a very strong Victorian side in the final. The light blues included Brett Emerton, Sebastian Sinozic, Yane Talcevski, Daniel Ucchino, Michael Cunico, Robert Trajcevski and Adam Brodbeck, all of whom went on to have significant careers in the game. Lined up against them were Vince Grella, Danny Allsopp, Simon Colosimo, Rodrigo Vargas, John Maisano, Clayton Bell and Colin Azzopardi. Between them these two talented groups produced most of the Joeys who took part in the Under-17 World Cup in Ghana where Australia pipped Spain on goal difference to qualify from its group behind Nigeria. Brazil proved too good in the quarter-finals and Danny Allsopp was top scorer with 5 goals and Kewell got the other.

Very soon the precocious Kewell was on his way to Leeds United where he began as a wing-back and his powerful engine got him up and down the field following his debut in the first team under Howard Wilkinson. He flourished under George Graham and David O'Leary clocking up over 180 league appearances and scoring 45 goals. On 24 April 1996, Eddie Thomson gave Kewell his first Socceroo cap against Chile in Antofagasta. Eddie was shrewd enough to know that Kewell could have been tempted to play for England so it was vital to ensure that he was aligned with the Green and Gold. Most sources want to claim that as a result he was the youngest player to be capped by Australia, but this is not true. Duncan Cummings was months younger when he made his debut against China in 1975, scoring within minutes of coming on as a substitute. That was the first of Cummings' two games for Australia, while Kewell was to go on to amass 56 games and score 17 goals.

From Leeds, Kewell transferred to Liverpool where he was to win a series of trophies including the European Champions League in 2005, when injury resulted in his substitution before his team-mates produced a miraculous second half fight-back against AC Milan and won the cup on penalties. He played just under 100 league games for the Reds scoring a dozen goals. In 2008 he moved to Galatasaray in Turkey, captaining the club and performing various feats including a couple of matches at centre-half when injuries to other players occurred.

Meanwhile he took part in Australia's unsuccessful qualifying campaign for the World Cup in 1997, scoring critical goals away from home and at the MCG against Iran. His heroics were not enough and Australia lost on the away goals rule. It was an equally sad story in 2001 as a home win over Uruguay thanks to a Kevin Muscat penalty was cancelled out by the three-nil loss in Montevideo. Opinions differ as to Kewell's contribution to the away leg. My feeling was that he left Mark Viduka unsupported in the striking role failing to be close enough to the big man who had three top class defenders marking him for most of the game. In 2005 however Kewell came into his own with an inadvertent shank that set up Marco Bresciano for the goal at home to Uruguay and putting away one of the successful penalty kicks. Then in Germany in the finals he scored the decisive second goal against Croatia, but then had to miss the Italy game in the round of 16 thanks to what was suggested to be gout at the time.

Kewell backed up again in 2010 in South Africa though he was perhaps harshly sent off for blocking a goal-bound effort against Ghana in the second match and hence badly missed then and in the victory over Serbia. Kewell also contributed in Australia's Asian Cup campaigns in 2007 and 2011.

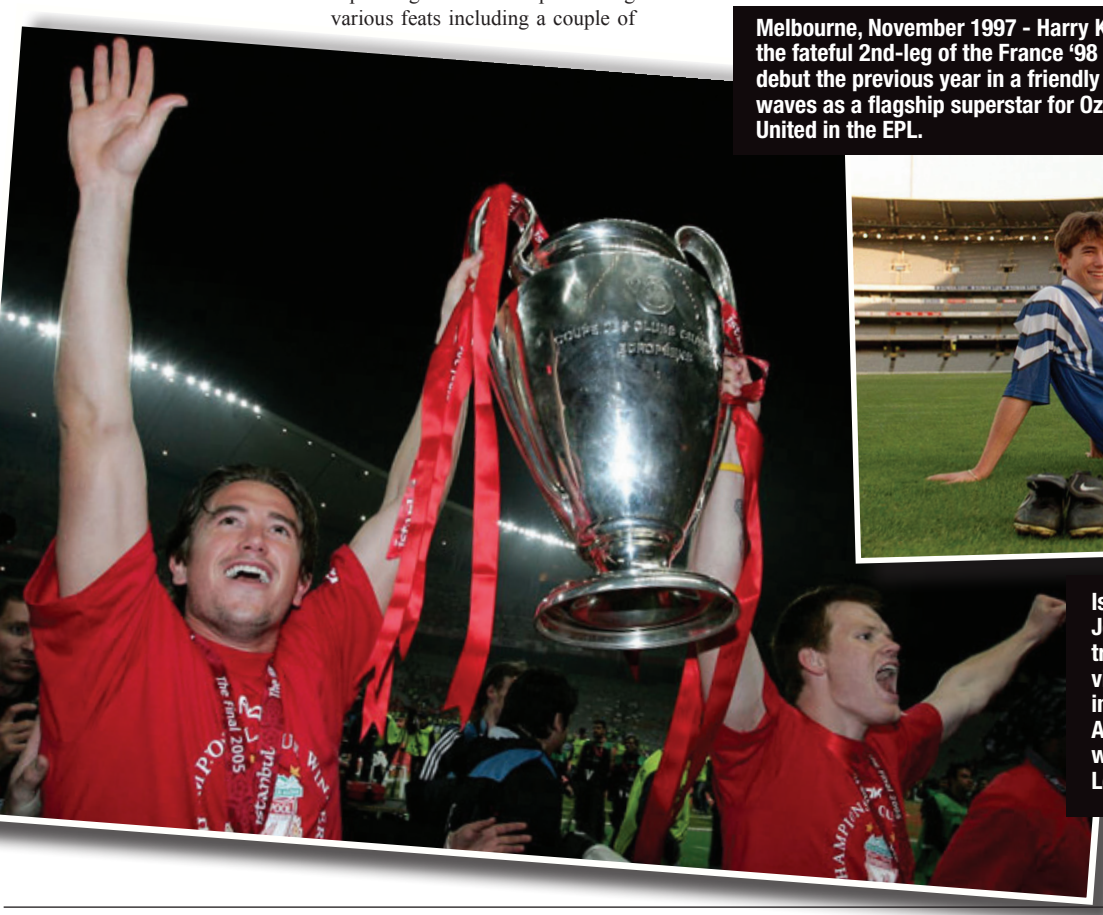
He was named as Australia's greatest ever player in a poll in 2012 which inevitably focused on recent stars. He certainly generated the charisma which attracted people to the game in an age of celebrity. So when he returned to Australia in 2011 and signed with Melbourne Victory on a contract which gave him an element of his income based on the number of extra fans he attracted to the game, there is no doubt that he boosted the profile of the club and the A-League. However by now his body was giving him less chance to demonstrate his talent, though as the first season ran its course his contribution on the field improved significantly. After the season he returned to England and then played briefly with Al-Garafa in Qatar before coming home for what turned out to be his final fling at Melbourne Heart. Again injuries cruelled his season, but he deserves to go out with a flourish in Heart's final game of the season against Western Sydney Wanderers on 12 April.

Kewell attracted a fair amount of controversy over his long career, partly explicable as a product of the tall poppy syndrome, but some self inflicted or a result of the agents with whom he dealt. Also the injuries he suffered were not appreciated by those furthest from the man himself and his abrasive or dismissive attitude to the media did not always work to enhance his image. Nevertheless, he has been a major contributor to Australia's recent success, as key member of the 'golden generation'. In time people will be able to evaluate his career more dispassionately and with greater perspective, but he is certainly one to be considered when listing the players who have lifted the profile of the game in this country.

Photo: DANIEL FLIS

Take a bow, Harry...

- Winner: 2005 UEFA Champions League with Liverpool FC
- Winner: 2006 FA Cup with Liverpool FC
- Winner: 2006 UEFA Super Cup with Liverpool FC
- Runner-Up: 2007 UEFA Champions League with Liverpool FC
- 60 International Matches for Australia, including 19 goals
- Youngest ever debutante for the Socceroos in 1996 at 17 years, 7 months;
- Appearances at the 2006 and 2010 FIFA World Cup
- 2000 PFA Premiership Young Player of the Year & PFA Team of the Year
- EPL debut for Leeds United in 1996 as a 17 year old
- Three-time Oceania Footballer of the Year
- Member of the Executive of the PFA from 2002 to 2008
- PFA Harry Kewell Medal: Awarded to Australia's Young Player of the Year



Istanbul, May 2005 - Harry and Liverpool teammate John-Arne Riise hold the UEFA Champions League trophy aloft following the Reds' 3-2 penalty-shootout victory over AC Milan in the Final. Despite coming off injured in the match, Harry still became only the second Australian - after Craig Johnston, who also won it with Liverpool - to play in a European Cup/Champions League-winning side.

Melbourne, November 1997 - Harry Kewell on the hallowed MCG turf in the lead-up to the fateful 2nd-leg of the France '98 qualifying tie vs. Iran. Having made his international debut the previous year in a friendly against Chile, the teenage Kewell was already making waves as a flagship superstar for Oz football abroad courtesy of his stellar form for Leeds United in the EPL.

Words by Alvaro Rodriguez

Harry's Factfile

Full name: Harold Kewell
Birthdate: 22 Sept 1978 (age 35)
Birthplace: Sydney, Australia
Height: 180 cm (5 ft 11 in)

Youth career
Smithfield Hotspurs
1990–1995 Marconi Stallions
1995–1997 Leeds United

Senior career

		Apps	(Gls)
1996–2003	Leeds Utd	181	(45)
2003–2008	Liverpool	98	(12)
2008–2011	Galatasaray	63	(22)
2011–2012	Melb Victory	25	(8)
2013	Al-Gharafa	3	(1)
2013-2014	Melb Heart	14	(2)

National team

1994-1995	Australia U17	10	(1)
1997	Australia U20	3	(0)
1996–2012	Australia	56	(17)

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Season starts with a bang!

Men's NIKE League

To get the ball rolling for the Men title hopefuls Fitzroy took on Mickleham in what on paper looked an easy win.

It was hardly that early though at Mickleham lead 3-1 for a long period but they just could not stop Fitzroy as the tigers ran over the top of their opposition with a big 9-5 win. Mark Burton and Joao Silveira the stars for Fitzroy as they will play a key role in the season ahead. Next game on the card saw Ashburton take on the champions Vic Vipers. Ashburton made it a contest but the Vipers (despite missing Adam Cooper) got the points on the opening day to get their season off to a flying start. Next up title hopefuls Pascoe Vale took on newly promoted Balwyn. Balwyn stunned Pascoe by racing out to a 2-0 lead and looking like they could cause a massive upset. But it was not to be as Pascoe on the back of 3 goals from Sofiane Soufi ran out 8-4 winners. To close out round 1 Hume took on a depleted Metropolitan. Looking fatigued from their cup run and down on players Metro just couldn't cope with a rejuvenated Hume as the black army put in a stunning display to get their season off to the best possible start on the back of a 4 goal showing from George Harrison.

Women's PEPSI League

To kick off a new season Richmond began their title defence by crushing newcomers Carlton 13-0 with a stamp put on the league that Richmond would mot let up on their first title as they look to go back to back for the first time in history, Key Performers were Azize Erenli, Emily Hulbert and Kariah White who all bagged hat tricks.

Next clash on the card saw Fitzroy take on Melbourne Uni and with both severely depleted it made for a tight contest. In the end Fitzroy just had a little to much in their Arsenal as they held on to win 3-2 and get their season off to a positive start. Closing out Round 1 a new look Ashburton did battle with the Vic Vipers who both would look to improve on what you could say was a poor opening season. It was the green machine who took home the points 2-0 in a complete display that sends out an ominous warning to their rivals.

Sofiane Soufi banged in a hat trick as he guided his side to an important opening day win.

Shayan Rashidi (L) and Ahmed Azzam (R) were the backbone of the win over Metropolitan.

Mark Burton and Alistair Dunlop celebrate a goal during the big win over Mickleham.

Ricardo Castro (Green) holds the ball up in their loss to the Vipers.

Richmond get their season off to a brilliant start after a 13-0 thumping of newcomers Carlton.

Futsal Oz Scoreboard

Womens PEPSI League

Results

CF Brunswick 0-6 Pascoe Vale FC
FC Richmond 13-0 FC Carlton
Fitzroy FC 3-2 Melbourne Uni FC
Ashburton FC 2-0 Vic Vipers FC

Next Round

7:30pm - FC Carlton vs Melb Uni FC
8:15pm - CF Brunswick vs Ashburton
9:00pm - Pascoe Vale FC vs Fitzroy FC
9:45pm - Vic Vipers FC vs FC Richmond

NIKE Men's V-League

Results

Fitzroy FC 9-5 Mickleham FC
Ashburton FC 4-6 Vic Vipers FC
FC Balwyn 4-8 Pascoe Vale FC
Hume FC 8-3 Metropolitan FC

Next Round

5:00pm - Mickleham FC vs Metro FC
6:00pm - Vic Vipers FC vs Fitzroy FC
7:00pm - Pascoe Vale FC vs Hume FC
8:00pm - FC Balwyn vs Ashburton FC

FOz Cup Top Goalscorers

Mens

1. George Harrison - Hume FC - 4
2. Mark Burton - Fitzroy FC - 3
3. Sofiane Soufi - Pascoe Vale FC - 3
4. Hamid Hassanikhoo - M'ham - 3
5. Alistair Dunlop - Fitzroy FC - 2

Women's

1. Azize Erenli - FC Richmond - 3
2. Emily Hulbert - FC Richmond - 3
3. Kariah White - FC Richmond - 3
4. Maya Edgerton-Bachman - 2
5. Busra Mankir - Fitzroy FC - 1

Standings

NIKE V-LEAGUE Premiership

	P	W	L	B	D	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Hume FC	1	1	0	0	0	8	3	+5	3
2 Fitzroy FC	1	1	0	0	0	9	5	+4	3
3 Pascoe Vale FC	1	1	0	0	0	8	4	+4	3
4 Vic Vipers FC	1	1	0	0	0	6	4	+2	3
5 Ashburton FC	1	0	1	0	0	4	6	-2	0
6 Mickleham FC	1	0	1	0	0	5	9	-4	0
7 FC Balwyn	1	0	1	0	0	4	8	-4	0
8 Metropolitan FC	1	0	1	0	0	3	8	-5	0

Pepsi Womens WV-LEAGUE

	P	W	L	B	D	F	A	GD	Pts
1 FC Richmond	1	1	0	0	0	13	0	+13	3
2 Pascoe Vale FC	1	1	0	0	0	6	0	+6	3
3 Ashburton FC	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	+2	3
4 Fitzroy FC	1	1	0	0	0	3	2	+1	3
5 Melbourne Uni FC	1	0	1	0	0	2	3	-1	0
6 Vic Vipers FC	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	-2	0
7 CF Brunswick	1	0	1	0	0	0	6	-6	0
8 FC Carlton	1	0	1	0	0	0	13	-13	0

State League Championship

	P	W	L	B	D	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Moreland FC	1	1	0	0	0	10	1	+9	3
2 FC Collingwood	1	1	0	0	0	9	7	+2	3
3 FC Melbourne	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	+2	3
4 CF Brunswick	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+0	0
5 FC Carlton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+0	0
6 Brimbank FC	1	0	1	0	0	7	9	-2	0
7 Brighton FC	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	-2	0
8 Albert Park FC	1	0	1	0	0	1	10	-9	0

State League One

	P	W	L	B	D	F	A	GD	Pts
1 FC Essendon	1	1	0	0	0	11	3	+8	3
2 CF South Melb	1	1	0	0	0	6	1	+5	3
3 Mcleod FC	1	1	0	0	0	5	3	+2	3
4 FC Northcote	1	1	0	0	0	5	4	+1	3
5 FC Hawthorn	1	0	1	0	0	4	5	-1	0
6 FC Footscray	1	0	1	0	0	3	5	-2	0
7 Toorak FC	1	0	1	0	0	1	6	-5	0
8 FC Prahran	1	0	1	0	0	3	11	-8	0

State League Two

	P	W	L	B	D	F	A	GD	Pts
1 FC St Kilda	1	1	0	0	0	11	3	+8	3
2 Melb Uni	1	1	0	0	0	6	3	+3	3
3 FC Preston	1	1	0	0	0	5	3	+2	3
4 Elsternwick FC	1	1	0	0	0	3	2	+1	3
5 FC Richmond	1	0	1	0	0	2	3	-1	0
6 FC Geelong	1	0	1	0	0	3	5	-2	0
7 Coburg Athletic	1	0	1	0	0	3	6	-3	0
8 Doncaster FC	1	0	1	0	0	3	11	-8	0

Alexandra Gummer (L) Made a good debut scoring against the Vipers to help her side to a win.

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SETANTA SPORTS

FRIDAY 28TH MARCH
Skrill Premier Round 41 Southport v Forest Green 6:40am LIVE
Bundesliga Round 28 Preview Show 7:00pm 1st Airing
Scottish Premiership Round 31 Highlights Show 7:30pm 1st Airing

SATURDAY 29TH MARCH
Bundesliga Round 28 Schalke v Hertha Berlin 6:25am LIVE
Copa Libertadores 2nd Stage Matchday 6 Highlights Show 12:10pm 1st Airing
Sky Bet Championship Round 39 Burnley v Leicester 11:10pm LIVE

SUNDAY 30TH MARCH
Sky Bet Championship Round 39 Ipswich v Nottm Forest 1:55am LIVE
Bundesliga Round 28 Freiburg v Nuremburg 4:25am LIVE
Bundesliga Round 28 Bayern Munich v Hoffenheim 6:30am 1st Airing
Bundesliga Round 28 Stuttgart v Dortmund 8:20am 1st Airing
Scottish Premiership Round 32 Hearts v Hibernian 10:45pm LIVE

MONDAY 31ST MARCH
Bundesliga Round 28 Hannover v Werder Bremen 3:25am LIVE
Primera Division Round 10 TBC v TBC 8:10am LIVE
Primera Division Round 10 TBC v TBC 11:10am LIVE
Bundesliga Round 28 Monchengladbach v Hamburg 3:20pm 1st Airing
Bundesliga Round 28 Highlights Show 7:00pm 1st Airing
Sky Bet Championship Round 39 Highlights Show 9:50pm 1st Airing

FOX SPORTS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
All times AEDT
All games LIVE unless stated

WEEK 33
Sat Mar 29 Man Utd v Aston Villa
11.35 pm Fox 1

Sun Mar 30 Crystal Palace v Chelsea
1.50 am Fox 1

Sun Mar 30 Southampton v Newcastle
1.50 am Viewers Choice

Sun Mar 30 Stoke v Hull
1.50 am Viewers Choice

Sun Mar 30 West Brom v Cardiff
1.50 am Viewers Choice

Sun Mar 30 Swansea v Norwich
1.50 am Viewers Choice

Sun Mar 30 Arsenal v Manchester City
4.15 am Fox 1

Sun Mar 30 Fulham v Everton
11.20 pm Fox 1

Mon Mar 31 Liverpool v Tottenham
1.50 am Fox 1

Tue Apr 1 Sunderland v West Ham
5.50 am Fox 2

HYUNDAI A-LEAGUE
ALL GAMES LIVE

Fri Mar 28 Brisbane v Melbourne Heart
8.00 pm Fox 1

Sat Mar 29 Mariners v Wanderers
5.30 pm Fox 3

Sun Mar 29 Victory v Sydney
7.45 pm Fox 2

Mon Mar 30 Phoenix v Adelaide
3.00 pm Fox 3

Mon Mar 30 Perth v Newcastle
7.00 pm Fox 1

Magazine Shows
Sunday 30 March
Santo, Sam and Ed's Total Football
9.10 pm
(Fox 1)

(No Shootout scheduled).

SPANISH LA LIGA
Sun Mar 30 Athletic Bilbao v Atletico Madrid
5.55 am Fox 3

Mon Mar 31 Valencia v Getafe
5.55 am Fox 1

SBS

SBS ONE
Evey Friday
7:30 pm **A-League Live**

Every Sunday
4:30 pm **UEFA Champions League Magazine**

Every Monday
4:30 pm **FIFA Futbol Mundial**
11:00 pm **The World Game**

Every Thursday
8:30 pm **Thursday FC**
11:00 pm **UEFA Champions League Highlights Show**

SBS TWO
Every Monday
9:30 pm **A-League Highlights Show**

Every Tuesday
5:00 pm **A-League Highlights Show**

Sasa Re-Signs with Sydney FC

Sydney FC has signed centre half Sasa Ognenovski on a new 1 year contract which will see the 2010 Asian Player of the Year remain with the club until the end of the 2014/15 Hyundai A-League season.

The Socceroo returned to Australia to sign for the Sky Blues in February adding more stability and leadership to the back four. His performances in the six games he has played for the club have earned the Asian Champions League winner a new deal.

"I'm delighted to be staying for another year at Sydney FC," said the former Brisbane and Adelaide defender.

"We are building a good squad for next season and the club has some very talented youngsters coming through the ranks so I think that is a huge positive.

"I like the bold ambitions the club is setting and hopefully I can be a big part of that."

Head Coach Frank Farina welcomed the re-signing of the Australian International, who captained South Korean club Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma to the AFC Champions League title in 2010.

"Sasa has provided extra strength and discipline in our defensive line and has thoroughly deserved this new deal," said Farina.

"He is an asset to the club and is an integral part of a strong backbone that every team needs.

"I believe he still has plenty of good football left in him and his experience in the games ahead and next year will be invaluable."

Ognenovski has played 22 times for the Socceroos, scoring one goal.

TV Heaven

Matthew Naqvi

Well that was another massive week in football! Brisbane Roar has won the Premiers Plate after defeating their nearest threat Melbourne Victory.

One of Australia's finest ever football players Harry Kewell announced his retirement from all forms of the game. He has had popularise football in Australia and played a pivotal part in Australia's success during the 2006 and 10 World Cup campaigns.

Lionel Messi cemented himself further of the best player of his generation with a brilliant performance against Real Madrid in the El Clasico to give his team a 4-3 win. Messi tormented the Real defence and scored an amazing hat-trick, putting Barcelona back amongst the frontrunners in the league.

Meanwhile Orlando Engelaar scored one of the best goals in A-League history with a long range effort from his half just before the halfway line. Despite his spectacular effort, Heart lost and will not play finals. If you haven't seen it, check it out now.

Saturday night's clash between bitter rivals Melbourne Victory and Sydney FC has the potential to be a real classic. Victory is playing their last home game for the regular season and will be desperate for revenge after their 5-0 loss at home weeks ago. Sydney is out of the top six and need to win to keep their chances alive.

Melbourne Victory has recovered from their frenetic schedule of five games in sixteen days and will be determined to lock in second spot for a home final.

Victory's midfield will be the key to securing three points, if they can keep possession and pressure Sydney's defence with constant attacks and runs. Victory to win 2-1 in a thriller with plenty of cards.

In the EPL Arsenal had a shock draw against Swansea City and all but gave up their chances of winning the title. Top four is even looking doubtful.

Manchester City on the flipside looks like real title contenders with consistency and a tendency to score heavily. They have games in hand and are only four points behind league leaders Chelsea.

Arsenal has lost their way in the latter stages of the season and a loss here will put immense pressure on Arsene Wenger and could be the game that determines his future at the club.

Manchester City embarrassed their fierce rivals Manchester United 3-0 and this game could have a similar outcome. City has well and truly clicked into gear this season and they will win this contest to keep in the mix with Chelsea and Liverpool.

Once the weekend's action is over make sure to tune into SBS for The A-League Highlights Show hosted by Craig Foster and The World Game on Monday night. Get your comedy gold fix with Santo, Sam and Ed's Total Football over on Foxtel.

Enjoy plenty of football action this weekend and hopefully your team wins.

WPL prepares for season Kick Off

ByKatie Lambeski

The Victorian Women's Premier League kicks off the 2014 season on Friday night as it welcomes an extended competition and new teams to the fray. It promises to be an exciting and even season with as many as five teams realistically aiming to be crowned champions come the end of the season.

Sandringham, last year's Champions, now have the enviable task of aiming to go back-to-back. They are in solid position to do just that, as their professional, grinding style had them high in the pecking order and saw them stop the heavily favoured South Melbourne in their tracks on Grand Final day last season. Sean Parton's side have maintained the core of their champion squad, whether they can retain the crown will be a talking point.

South Melbourne reigned supreme for nearly the whole season 2013 until falling at the final hurdle, so is redemption on the cards? There is no major reason why they cannot. Despite losing arguably last season's player of the year in midfielder Morany Chek, coach Bill Mihaloudis has held on to the bulk of his strong squad. South's attacking, intense and high pressing game took them to just one step away, they should be expected to be thereabouts again this season.

Bundoora United have been a club that has been near enough but has fell just short of breaking their glass ceiling. Pre-season whispers indicate Bundoora has recruited strongly and that a strong squad will run out for Bundoora in 2014, having had Victory stars like Gülcan Koca and Caitlin Friend in its ranks over the last seasons. They have been a side that has played entertaining football, it's hard to see that changing.

Sandringham will be keen to defend their WPL crown. Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

WPL Round 1

Box Hill United vs Ashburton
8:30 PM / Fri 28 Mar
Wembley Park
Monbulk Rangers vs Heidelberg United
3:00 PM / Sat 29 Mar
Monbulk Recreation Reserve
Cairnlea vs Casey Comets
3:00 PM / Sun 30 Mar
Cairnlea Park - Pitch 1
Boroondara Eagles vs Bundoora
6:00 PM / Sun 30 Mar
Knox Regional Football Centre
Sandringham vs FFV Under 17
8:30 PM / Mon 31 Mar
Kingston Heath
FC Bulleen Lions vs South Melb
8:30 PM / Mon 31 Mar
Veneto Club

Box Hill United have been another solid and consistent performer over the last two seasons, having won the Championship in 2012 and making a semi-final in 2013. When it comes to discussing contenders, they can't be far off the mark.

Another team that fits the "almost there" tag is **Heidelberg United.** The club was forced last season to dig deep into their reserves ranks as they dealt with injuries to key players and the departure of flying winger Stacey Papadopoulos. But they still managed to play an attacking style make a semi-final under John Kyrgios, a long-time assistant at the club. They have the potential to make themselves challengers, but will face a stern bloc who is already at that level.

Boorandara Eagles and **Monbulk Rangers** will take the field this season as the WPL grew from ten teams to twelve in the offseason, they will provide an unknown quantity. They gained promotion after supreme seasons in the second divisions, but will find the top flight a much tougher ask.

Headlining Boroondara's squad is Adelaide United W-League stars Alex Gummer and Rachael Quigley, giving the Eagles an edge they will desperately need. Victory midfielder Emily Hulbert will add the same to her home club Monbulk, who is returning after a spell at Box Hill.

Ashburton, by their own admission, will find the going tough as they have been forced to adopt a focus on youth. They have had to rethink their ambitions of a top-five finish but are confident the future is bright. Sinisa Cohadzic takes the reins at the club, having had a wealth of experience as a player and recently as a coach. They will be a mid-table club, having enough experience in the likes of Bonnie Barnes to help guide youth.

Bulleen will look to pick up from their hot run of form toward the end of 2013. A young side, but fearless in approach with a nimble and fleet-footed attack, won't be easy to beat. **Cairnlea** and **Casey** may join them in that category. Cairnlea, under emerging young coach Ricardo Marchioli, are in need of change after a dismal past two years, Marchioli was on track to do the same with Altona last season, a point of intrigue will be to see how they progress.

An FFV Under 17s team will take the field this year, with a slight name change from last season's Emerging Athletes Program team. That same side boasted the likes of Victory teen sensation Beattie Goad last year, so it is always a point of excitement as to who the next group of girls get experience in the top Victorian level. Much like last season, they may surprise a few but they will likely fall just short against the top four powerhouses.

FFV joins forces with Sportsmart

By Katie Lambeski

On Wednesday, Football Federation Victoria announced a new three-year partnership with sportswear retailer Sportsmart that includes naming right's for FFV's Womens Premier League and a new online store to supply playing gear to WPL clubs.

Anthony Grima, FFV General Manager of Commercial, Marketing and Communications, made the announcement to media at FFV headquarters.

"I'm especially delighted to announce that major retailer Sportsmart has partnered with FFV to become the official sports retailer, and significantly, the major sponsor of the newly branded Sportsmart Women's Premier League."

"Sportsmart will also hold naming rights for all community junior leagues, and operate FFV's online shop, which will launch in upcoming weeks. This three-year partnership will not only ensure FFV's commercial sustainability and will also translate to major benefits for the entire football community."

"The partnership will lift the professionalism of our organisation to a whole new level, while servicing the needs of all key stakeholders including players, coaches, match officials and most importantly clubs and volunteers."

Sportsmart director Gerard Wilson, also present at the announcement, spoke of the momentum around Victorian football and why the sports retailer decided to come on board with FFV.

"Its an exciting time to be involved with Victorian football, and we're delighted to play an integral role supporting football in the state, in particular womens football. We at Sportsmart do feel the buzz and excitement that surrounds Victorian football."

Liam Bentley, the head of National Premier League Victoria and the WPL, welcomed the announcement and was positive about what the future holds following the W-League success of Melbourne Victory.

"We are delighted to have Sportsmart associated with the WPL."

"Women's football in particular has been on the rise for some time, especially now in Victoria on the back of Melbourne Victory winning the Westfield W-League title," Bentley said.

The deal announced will also benefit men's football, particularly at a junior level, as Grima announced.

"Sportsmart will have some role in the NPL and junior leagues, they are going to provide a $10,000's worth of prizes and awards to the junior best and fairest teams. That will be formally announced down the track."

Grima also indicated a similar deal may be on track for the NPL Victoria.

"We can watch this space on that. Obviously the FFA looks after the commercialization of the men's NPL. There will be hopefully, in the not too distant future, some announcements made regarding the NPL and suppliers, and also for NPL juniors."

It is often said women's sport in general is commercially unviable, this is a positive step not just for women's football but also sport. A rise in commercial partnerships for Victory in the last W-League season proved to be a factor in Sportsmart's deal with the FFV, according to Wilson.

"It really showed how commercially sound an investment would be through a partnership like this and how much support we would get from FFV. It was exciting seeing the Victory win the W-League final and seeing the participation rise in girls."

Big Crowds Flock to NSW NPL Events

NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES

Mark Stavroulakis

What a weekend in the NPL IGA NSW Mens 1 competition.
The grand opening of the new Lambert Park saw nearly 6000 fans through the turnstiles at the famous old ground on Saturday night.
While on Sunday night, over 7000 came through the gate to see Sotirios Kyrgiakos play the first of two matches for Sydney Olympic.
In both matches the fairytale was ruined by the visiting sides, but let that not detract from an amazing weekend.

Lambert Park was awash with dignitaries at the official grand opening.

NPL NSW - Round 2

APIA-Leichhardt Tigers 0
Marconi Stallions 2

Sutherland Sharks 2
South Coast Wolves 1

Manly United 1
Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2

Sydney Olympic 1
Blacktown Spartans 3

Rockdale City Suns 0
Sydney United 58 FC 0

St George 0
Blacktown City 2

NPL NSW - Round 3

SATURDAY
Blacktown Spartans v Rockdale City Suns
7:30pm at Blacktown Football Park

Marconi Stallions v Blacktown City FC
7:30pm at Marconi Stadium

SUNDAY
Sydney United 58 FC v Bonnyrigg White Eagles
2pm at Sydney United Sports Centre

Manly United v APIA-Leichhardt Tigers
3pm at Cromer Park

St George v Sutherland Sharks
3pm at WIN Jubilee Stadium

South Coast Wolves v Sydney Olympic
5pm at WIN Stadium

Former Greek international Sotirios Kygiakos in action as a guest player for Sydney Olympic

Tadrosee and Tomic go head to head when Bonnyrigg take on Sydney United 58.

ROUND REVIEW
SATURDAY

APIA-Leichhardt Tigers 0-2 Marconi Stallions *at Lambert Park*

The wind and the rain didn't stop the fans from flowing through the gate into the state-of-the-art new facility in Leichhardt.
Unfortunately for APIA, Marconi crashed the party.
On a historic night for APIA, they started brightly, only to concede to Milorad Simonovic, who turned and scored into the bottom corner.
Andrew Bazi, between the sticks for the home side, was on fire and made a number of fantastic saves.
Unfortunately for him and for APIA, it was all in vain, as Sean O'Connell lashed a shot past him in stoppage time to guarantee the three points for Marconi Stallions, who will play Manly United in a midweek catch-up match.

Sutherland Sharks 2-1 South Coast Wolves *at Seymour Shaw Park*

Sutherland Sharks bounced back from their trouncing by Blacktown Spartans last weekend, to record a 2-1 win at home to South Coast Wolves.
Wolves were themselves coming off a round one thrashing, theirs at the hands of the other Blacktown club, Blacktown City, who won 5-0.
Both sides started brightly but it was Wolves who took the lead when Ricky Zucco found the back of the net in the 17' minute.
Sharks were able to welcome back Nick Stavroulakis and Nathan Denham, who were both absent from last week's mauling, but it was a player who was there in Panny Nikas who found the equaliser. The diminutive midfielder looks well on his way to another year of goals.
Jordan Figon was the match winner for Sharks, breaking Wolves hearts with 11' minutes remaining.

SUNDAY

Manly United 1-2 Bonnyrigg White Eagles *Cromer Park*

Manly United could face no tougher start to their season than a match against competition favourites Bonnyrigg White Eagles.
They gave a good account of themselves, reaffirming the belief that they can turn a few heads in 2014.
Chris Payne's goal had them in front at the break, but they weren't able to hold on.
A double salvo from Bonnyrigg midway through the second half saw them snatch the three points. The first was scored by Alexander Canak, and the second, a screamer from Bo Hyun Chun was worthy of winning any game.

Sydney Olympic 1-3 Blacktown Spartans
Belmore Sports Ground

It goes to show that not even a European Championships winner can do everything. Sotirios Kyrgiakos was at the heart of the Olympic defence by they still conceded thrice at home to Blacktown Spartans.
Spartans are quickly carving out a reputation as the team most likely to break the established order at the top of the table and after thrashing Sutherland last week, they played with verve and confidence this weekend.
Amaury Gauthier gave Olympic the lead early on, but a goal in either half from Elsid Barkhousir put Spartans ahead.
Ray Miller rapped up the points with 7' minutes remaining, leaving the 7000 or so fans disappointed at the final whistle.

Rockdale City Suns 0-0 Sydney United 58 FC
Ilinden Sports Centre

Rockdale City and Sydney United played out a dull 0-0 draw on Sunday afternoon.
The master and the apprentice went head to head in the dugout as Branko Culina and Mark Rudan tried to outfox each other.
Neither could get the upper hand in a match that struggled to live up to expectation in the stifling heat.
Diego Barcena, the Sydney United 58 goalkeeper, returned to the ground where he made his NPL name, keeping a clean sheet.

St George 0-2 Blacktown City
WIN Jubilee Stadium

St George were outclassed by Blacktown City at WIN Jubilee Stadium, as Mark Crittenden's side continued their super start to the season.
They've now scored seven goals and are yet to concede in their two matches, after a comfortable 2-0 win against Manny Spanoudakis' St George.
Sasa Macura gave Blacktown City the lead in the first half and from there they never looked back.
Juan Chavez, who scored twice last week, was well marshalled and to that end, St George's goal threat was stifled.
Daniel Araujo, a first half substitute, ended any arguments with a goal in the second half to send his side home with the points.

NPL NSW Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1 Blacktown Sptns	2	2	0	0	9	2	7	6
2 Blacktown City	2	2	0	0	7	0	7	6
3 Rockdale City	2	1	1	0	2	0	2	4
4 Marconi Stallions	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	3
5 Sydney Olympic	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	3
6 Bonnyrigg WE	2	1	0	1	2	3	-1	3
7 Sutherland Sharks	2	1	0	1	3	7	-4	3
8 APIA Leich Tigers	2	0	1	1	2	4	-2	1
9 St George FC	2	0	1	1	2	4	-2	1
10 Sydney United	2	0	1	1	0	2	-2	1
11 Manly United	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
12 Sth Coast Wolves	2	0	0	2	1	7	-6	0

Latin Wrap

Francis Fields

HEINZE RETIRES

Argentine defender Gabriel Heinze has announced his retirement from football following a long battle with injury. The Newell's Old boys defender has struggled to recover from a number of different physical problems in recent years, prompting him to hang up his boots at the age of 35.

"As everything in life, dreams have an end too," Heinze said in a statement on the club's official website. "Being part of the most beautiful club in Argentina will always be in my heart. I want to tell you that at the end of this season I won't continue playing. I can't fight against my body's reality. I can't win this match. "I would play for the rest of my life for Newell's, but I know I can't be selfish. Loving a club is also taking responsible decisions with gratitude to a club that only gave me happiness.

"It's time to finish my contract with Newell's, but I will comply my contract. I'll give the best of me in the months ahead, because the club always comes first. "I trust the leadership to use the money for young players, who are the future of this club. That's my wish, that puts into words my loyalty as a fan."

Heinze began his career with the Argentine club before spells with Real Valladolid, Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester United, Real Madrid, Olympique Marseille and AS Roma. He returned to Newell's in 2012 and made 41 appearances for the club before announcing his retirement on Friday. He was also capped 72 times for Argentina between 2003 and 2010.

Newell's Old Boys is renowned for producing a fine line of world-star players none other than Lionel Messi, Maxi Rodríguez, former players and now coaches Ricardo Lunari and Gerardo Martino among others.

Currently former French international David Trézeguet is playing with the club whilst emblematic coach Marcelo Bielsa is adored, with the stadium named after him.

GREEN LIGHT FOR CITY

Lawmakers have approved a bill that World Cup organisers say is needed to allow the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre take part in hosting the tournament. Tuesday's approval came a day after Mayor José Fortunati said the city was in danger of being excluded because of the delay in the vote. The bill authorises tax exemptions for companies interested in funding the facilities, which are needed in all 12 host cities to accommodate the media, sponsors and technical teams. The stadium owner, Brazilian club Internacional, now needs to find the companies to pay for the structures.

PoL's Football Funnies

Boo's World

Mark Boric

The Premiers Plate has gone back to Brisbane Roar, who will now look to take the A-League toilet seat to complete the 2013-14 trophy set. It was a great game between the Roar and Melbourne Victory, which required a spectacular strike from Luke Brattan to win it deep in stoppage time.

By the end of the weekend, however, the goal had become nothing special as first Wayne Rooney for Manchester United in the EPL and then Orlando Engelaar for Melbourne Heart against Central Coast overshadowed it with half-way line efforts.

The main talking point from the Newcastle Jets v Wellington Phoenix clash was not another Phoenix capitulation, but the appalling state of the pitch. Maybe there has been some confusion there, and instead of thinking they will be hosting a semi-final of the AFC Asian Cup they thought they were getting the Final of the Beach Soccer World Cup?

The Wanderers took their AFC Champions League form into their clash with Perth Glory and wiped the floor with them. Their fans were in good voice, probably benefiting from resting up with their recent protests. Glory seem to be well on track for their first ever wooden spoon, which will no doubt end up being used as a weapon in one of their training ground bust-ups.

Like the old Australia Cup, did Sarah Jelly end up in a rubbish skip following renovations on the set of Fox's Sunday Shootout? Not that I'm bemoaning her departure. This improvement to the show is negated by the move of Santo, Sam And Ed's Total Football to Sundays. Again, that in itself is not bad but when it is soon followed by the B-League aka the poor man's (and we're talking starving Africans here) Santo, Sam and Ed often covering the same topics and eve attempting the same gags it is a be wildering piece of programming.

This week's repeated fodder wa the run of Barcelona Joe Gomba in celebration of Adelaide United third goal against Sydney FC. Lik they said in South Park once, "Th Simpsons already did it".

Japanese side Urawa Red Dia monds had to play a game behin closed doors last week as punish ment for a banner deemed racist th was held up by supporters at the previous home game. The conte of the banner referred to "Japanes only". Hopefully the authorities a monitoring the bogan fans of som A-League clubs and making su their "F*** Off We're Full" t-shir are not worn at games.

It's good to see a professiona coach like Miron Bleiberg workin in the NPL Victoria. On SEN radi he admitted he didn't realise that t qualify for the FFA Cup you neede to reach the semi-finals of the Dock erty Cup until after his Oakleig Cannons side had been eliminate by Werribee City, in which he ha not played a full-strength line-u That's the level of preparation an professionalism we need to driv this elite competition forward.

Miron Bleiberg should have tuned in

Katsa's Korner

George Katsamboukas

Another week has passed and the good news is that all the Sprinkler Systems at the various Grounds have behaved themselves this week

Saw some very interesting crowd attendance numbers coming out of the NSW Premier League, last weekend, and it had me pondering why that NSW is miles ahead of Victoria, when it comes to NPL attendances.

Over 75000 at Sydney Olympic Vs Spartans and over 5500 at Marconi Vs Apia, with 3 of these Clubs - Sydney Olympic, Apia and Marconi - being powerhouses of the now defunct NSL.

The closest Victoria has come to this so far is 3750 when Heidelberg played South Melbourne played last weekend in the opneing round fixture of the NPL.

Kyrgiakos' debut for Sydney Olympic certainly boosted crowd figures, however that is the reason why Olympic signed him on a guest stint, to increase crowd attendances.

Victorian NPL preparation was somewhat short and unsettled to begin with, due to the uncertainty as to whether the League would actually go ahead, and which teams would be participating.

The Supreme Court is not the ideal place to prepare for a new League and a new Season, however with all of this now out of the way, Victorian Clubs, and the FFV need to begin to think outside the square, as to how to increase attendances.

The Santalab Vs Abbas sage continues with the Tribunal Hearing being adjourned for a later date, Santalab may face up to 10 week suspension, with a minimum of five weeks, if found guilty, something that he would not feel comfortable hanging over his head as finals football is fast approaching.

Congratulations to Brisbane Roar for taking out the Premiers Plate, once again finishing top of Table.

They are by far the most attractive side to watch in terms of their Paying Style and will no doubt be looking to add another Championship come Finals Time.

Victorian Soccer State Leagues commence week, which many Punters will be more than happy about.

The Die Hards will be watching games on Friday Nights, Saturday and Sunday Afternoons as well as Monday Nights.

I will be one of them!

This week's Odd Spot, we go to the Eastern Suburbs of Melbourne where one State League Team, whose identity will remain anonymous to protect the Guilty, have been instructed by their Coach that during matches, they are not to communicate with one another.

That means that there can be no yelling to receive the ball or instructing their Team Mate that there is a Man closing in on them, while they have the Ball.

Will be very interesting to see how this works for them, I would have no chance in playing for that Team as my ex team mates would attest, I was the loudest guy on the field, with the favourite catch cry being "Katsa's Ball" being bellowed out at every opportunity, irrespective of whether I had any chance of actually making contact with it, or not.

Until next week.

This is Katsa – Just as you have known him

Sotiris Kyrgiakos drew crowds in the NSW NPL.

Photos: LIVE PIXEL, GEORGE MARIN, BEN NEVILLE, CHRIS KELLY.

English Premier League

Nick Amies

It appears Arsenal will have to pin their hopes of silverware on the FA Cup this season after securing just one point from their games against Chelsea and Swansea.

Arsene Wenger's side now sit six points adrift of Chelsea with seven games remaining and would also need to leapfrog Liverpool and Manchester City if they were to break their eight year trophy drought.

Saturday's clash at Chelsea signalled the beginning of the end, with the home side racing out of the blocks with goals to Samuel Eto'o and Andre Schurrle in the first ten mintutes before Arsenal conceded a bizarre penalty. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain handled Eden Hazard's shot inside the box only to watch teammate Kieran Gibbs get sent off in a case of mistaken identity.

Hazard duly dispatched the spot-kick to extinguish any hopes of an Arsenal fightback before a brace from Oscar and a maiden Chelsea goal for Mohamed Salah put extra gloss on the result. Arsene Wenger's 1000th game in charge of the Gunners has simply created more questions about his side's chances of ever winning silverware again after another inept performance in a crucial game.

Fortunately for Arsene Wenger's side, they had a home game against Swansea City just three days later to erase the memories of Stamford Bridge. However the Gunners were once again not up to scratch, conceding a 90th minute own-goal to come away with a disappointing 2-all draw.

However, given that Arsenal began both games with Aaron Ramsey, Jack Wilshere, Mesut Ozil and Theo Walcott on the sidelines through injury before also losing Laurent Koscielny to injury before the Swansea match, there are now questions surrounding Arsene Wenger's training methods as well as his tactical decisions.

Brendan Rogers has not endured any tactical problems in recent week as Liverpool continue to impress in their own title bid. The 6-3 goalfest against Cardiff in Wales was a delight for neutrals, with the away side falling behind twice in the early stages before kicking clear in the second half. Luis Suarez notched up yet another hat-trick as well as assisting teammate Daniel Sturridge and Martin Skrtel surprisingly came up with a brace of finishes either side of the interval.

Fellow title rivals Manchester City began to make the most of their games in hand on Chelsea with two comprehensive victories over Fulham and Manchester United. Fulham proved an easy three points as anticipated thanks to Fernando Amorebieta's early red card for a kick on Alvaro Negredo before the Sky Blues humiliated their city rivals Manchester United in front of their own fans thanks to Edin Dzeko's brace and a third from Yaya Toure.

Manuel Pellegrini's side now sit in prime position just three points behind Chelsea with two games in hand and a superior goal difference, while Manchester United and David Moyes look up enviously at their rivals from seventh place.

A 2-nil triumph over West Ham just days after their comeback against Olympiacos in the Champions League had lifted spirits at Old Trafford, but once again their failure in a high-profile encounter has left a bitter taste in the mouths of supporters and increases the pressure on David Moyes' position at the club.

Another manager fighting for his future is Tottenham's Tim Sherwood, who made a compelling case after his side secured a comeback 3-2 win over a visiting Southampton. Two horrific mistakes from Kyle Naughton handed the visitors the initiative, but two goals from Christian Eriksen levelled the scores before substitute Gylfi Sigurdsson scored a dramatic injury time winner to keep his side's slim Champions League dreams alive.

If Spurs are to steal fourth place off their North London rivals they will also need to usurp Everton, who scored six goals in two games to move within six points of the Gunners having played one less game. Roberto Martinez's side did what Arsenal couldn't and secured a 3-2 victory over Swansea at Goodison Park before travelling to Newcastle and coming away with a comfortable 3-nil result thanks to goals from Ross Barkley, Romelu Lukaku and Leon Osman.

Everton snatching Champions League qualification at this stage of the season seems more likely than Sunderland ever making it out of the drop zone though, as once again the Black Cats failed to secure points against similar opposition. Their 2-nil loss may have been secured by a freakish goal off the right foot of Alexander Tettey, but Gus Poyet's side (strikers in particular) have had so much difficulty in finding the back of the net that Connor Wickham has received an SOS recall from his loan spell at Leeds to try and prevent a return to the Championship.

Sunderland's inability to pick up points makes things a little easier for Pepe Mel at West Brom, despite his side going down 2-nil to Hull City at the KC Stadium on the weekend. Liam Rosenior was the first to react when Nikica Jelavic had his penalty saved, before former Baggies striker Shane Long sealed the victory with a wonderful long-range strike in the second half.

Fellow relegation candidate Crystal Palace also failed to distance themselves from the drop zone despite a valiant effort at St. James' Park, with Newcastle narrowly triumphing thanks to Papiss Cisse's injury time winner.

EPL Preview

Arsenal's misery could continue this weekend as they welcome Manchester City to the Emirates, but Arsene Wenger will be hoping his players can repay their opposition for the 6-3 humiliation they were dealt in the reverse of this fixture in December.

Manuel Pellegrini's side will be looking to maintain their pressure on Chelsea at the top of the table, given the Blues travel to Selhurst Park in what should be a routine victory over Crystal Palace. Jose Mourinho will also have one eye on their midweek Champions League tie against PSG, but the squad he has at his disposal should be more than a match for Tony Pulis and the Eagles.

Manchester United, England's other remaining Champions League representative, have a slightly more difficult fixture ahead of them as they welcome Aston Villa to Old Trafford, but Wayne Rooney and his fellow strikers would have been salivating after watching Paul Lambert's side turn in one of the worst defensive displays of the season against Stoke City last weekend.

The Potters will be looking to build upon the momentum of that rare away win when they welcome Hull to the Britannia on Saturday, while the other day's matches also feature mid-table clashes between Southampton and Newcastle at St. Mary's and Swansea and Norwich at the Liberty Stadium.

Finally, Sunday's fixtures see both Merseyside clubs in action, with Everton travelling to the capital to take on Fulham at Craven Cottage while Liverpool welcome Tottenham to Anfield. Fulham will be desperate for a result as they try to make their way out of the bottom three, but the Toffees should come away with the points provided they avoid complacency.

Liverpool's meeting with Spurs has the potential to be entertaining, with both managers known for their proclivity for attacking football. Suarez and Sturridge will take on Adebayor and Soldado, but which strike duo will come out on top?

Pellegrini's men run riot at Old Trafford and Machester City underlined their status as kings of Manchester.

ENGLAND EPL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Chelsea	31	21	6	4	62	23	+39	69	W L W W W
2 Liverpool	31	21	5	5	84	39	+45	68	W W W W W
3 Manchester City	29	21	3	5	79	27	+52	66	W W W W D
4 Arsenal	31	19	6	6	55	36	+19	63	D L W L W
5 Everton	30	16	9	5	46	30	+16	57	W W W W L
6 Tottenham Hotspur	31	17	5	9	40	40	+0	56	W L L W L
7 Manchester United	31	15	6	10	48	37	+11	51	L W L W W
8 Newcastle United	31	14	4	13	38	43	-5	46	L W L W W
9 Southampton	31	12	9	10	45	40	+5	45	L W W L L
10 Stoke City	31	9	10	12	36	45	-9	37	W W D W L
11 West Ham United	31	9	7	15	34	41	-7	34	W L L L W
12 Aston Villa	30	9	7	14	33	42	-9	34	L W W L D
13 Hull City	31	9	6	16	33	39	-6	33	L W L L W
14 Norwich City	31	8	8	15	26	48	-22	32	W L D L W
15 Swansea City	31	7	9	15	42	48	-6	30	D L L D L
16 West Bromwich ...	30	5	13	12	33	45	-12	28	L W L D D
17 Crystal Palace	30	8	4	18	19	39	-20	28	L D L D L
18 Sunderland	29	6	7	16	27	46	-19	25	L L D L L
19 Cardiff City	31	6	7	18	26	58	-32	25	L L W L L
20 Fulham	31	7	3	21	30	70	-40	24	L W L L D

Latest Results	Next Match
Tottenham 3 - 2 Southampton	Man Utd v Aston Villa
Aston Villa 1 - 4 Stoke City	Crystal Palace v Chelsea
Man Utd 0 - 3 Manchester City	Southampton v Newcastle
Arsenal 2 - 2 Swansea City	Stoke City v Hull City
Newcastle U 0 - 3 Everton	Swansea City v Norwich City
West Ham United 2 - 1 Hull City	WBA v Cardiff City
Liverpool 2 - 1 Sunderland	Arsenal v Man City
	Fulham v Everton
	Liverpool v Tottenham
	Sunderland v West Ham

One To Watch This Weekend...

Arsenal's visit to Chelsea will have a massive bearing upon the title race no matter what the outcome. Wins to either side will enhance their respective chances of securing the title, while a draw will hand the initiative to Liverpool and Manchester City. Strap yourself in for Saturday's early kick-off; it will be one hell of a match.

Mourinho reverts to type to take Chelsea to the top

The London Eye

Eddie Gray in the UK

Jose Mourinho may not be the most liked manager in football. He may not produce sides that play with creativity, fluidity and flair. His team may rarely be involved in ten goal thrillers or nail biting finishes. But what comes with the Portuguese manager is efficiency, pace and power, and an unrivalled ruthless winning streak.

This style was a trademark of his first spell at Chelsea. With Arjen Robben, Damien Duff and Joe Cole alternating in the wide positions of a 4-3-3 formation, there was dynamism and directness that always threatened in behind opposition defences. Add to that mix a rampant Didier Drogba and the forward momentum the Blues delivered was almost unstoppable. Two league titles in successive years after Mourinho's arrival are proof of that.

At Inter Milan and Real Madrid the pattern was the same. In Italy, although his side was an aging one, he still had the pace of a prime Samuel Eto'o to stretch the play and utilise on the counter attack. With this he won the treble. Likewise in Madrid, the 51-year-old coach had Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and Angel Di Maria, all players who like to get beyond the back line, to deliver his style of play to great affect. The speed on the break at Real was hugely impressive and was one of the reasons the men from Madrid's capital could overcome Barcelona to win the La Liga title in 2011/12 – despite their rivals being regarded as one of the best club sides ever.

Now back in London with his beloved Blues, Mourinho has created a side that are favourites for the Premier League trophy and stand a good chance of progressing into the semi-finals of the Champions League. But how has the self-proclaimed 'special one' changed the fortunes of the Stamford Bridge outfit and returned them to their dominant best?

Like all of his previous sides he has installed an electric counter attacking system that can spring from any position. With a combination of Eden Hazard, Willian, Oscar or Andre Schurrle supporting a lone striker, there is a plethora of pace to get beyond the lead forward and make the transition from defence to attack one of the quickest in world football. In fact, it's these transitions that make Chelsea so dangerous. Once they win the ball back there is little time given to any thought other than getting the ball forward. This direct philosophy often leaves opposing sides outnumbered because of the rate the Blues get players into the final third and with the talent they have in their attacking line, there is often little hope for the retreating defenders.

But it's not gung-ho attack – far from it. However good they are on the front foot, they are perhaps even better at the back – another Mourinho trait. His side have conceded the fewest goals in the Premier League, having shipped just 23 – 14 less than current champions Manchester United. So what makes them so strong defensively?

As a collective unit they are disciplined, hard working and organised. The players entrusted with creating and scoring goals also take responsibility when not in possession, hounding and harassing their opponents frequently, providing an excellent advanced shield to the two central midfielders and back four.

At the back Chelsea are also very strong. Branislav Ivanovic, John Terry, Gary Cahill and Cesar Azpilicueta have made up the regular rearguard, with very little playing time for Ashley Cole as a result, and have provided Mourinho with 14 clean sheets – the highest in the division. Although not blessed with pace, their success has highlighted how a compact, well-drilled and tight unit can be when consistency in selection can be achieved.

Although the men from Stamford Bridge are strong both offensively and defensively there is one key attribute Mourinho has developed that stands them above their competitors – their physicality. To brandish a team 'physical' usually translates as a cynical approach coupled with some overzealous tackles. But for Chelsea this isn't the case.

Their powerful options in centre midfield, most notably David Luiz, Ramires and Nemanja Matic, have the physical attributes to get on top of some of more spontaneous opponents and control the game from a strong foothold. Despite a recent tendency of small, subtle and more technically gifted players taking up central roles in the creative hubs of teams, stemming from the success of Barcelona, Chelsea have demonstrated this year how strength and power can overcome what many have believed to be the best formula for success in the middle of the pitch.

Against Arsenal, when the Blues ran out 6-0 winners, this was a clear strength. Both centre midfielders, Luiz, 6ft 2in, and Matic, 6ft 4in, ran riot over their significantly smaller counterparts Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Santi Cazorla – both under the 6ft mark. The Chelsea pair's power and presence was too great for their opponents and played a key role in recovering the ball and setting up attacks for their dynamic front four. The ability to dictate such a significant part of the pitch was vital and played a key role in determining the result. Although Arsene Wenger lost Kirean Gibbs to a highly controversial red card, the game was in truth over by the time he picked up the dismissal, such was Chelsea's stranglehold.

Another key reason for the Stamford Bridge outfit being so strong in the Premier League is their record against the top four under their charismatic manager. In 24 games Chelsea have only lost twice to their title chasing rivals and have won 14 of those matches. Such is their grip on these clashes that they are consistently taking points off the teams around them and not only are they boosting their championship hopes but weakening their opposition's.

Mourinho has done it again. He has created another squad that can be regarded as one of the best in European football. With seemingly endless pace, power and strength in his team, Chelsea have the ability to strike any opponent, at any time, from any position – no matter how well their advisories retain the ball.

A place for dominant, physically gifted midfielders seemed to be dying out a few years ago – thanks to the success of small, diminutive and quick thinking players in the centre of the field – but Chelsea, under their Portuguese coach, have shown how important they can still be.

And with talent in every other area of the pitch, the Blues look well set for domestic and potentially European success.

Italian Serie A

Luca Cetta

The Mihajlovic effect leading Sampdoria

Sampdoria boss Sinisa Mihajlovic may be unconventional with the media, but it's hard to doubt his impact since joining the port-city club.

For Sinisa Mihajlovic, the call from Edoardo Garrone was a special one. Offered the chance to join Sampdoria, the decision was a simple one. Never mind the fact the Serbian was in charge of his national team. This was Sampdoria. And for Miha, a return home.

"When I arrived here as a player in 1994, I was going through a very difficult time on a professional level," Mihajlovic explained. "If I am where I am today, I owe it to the four years I spent with the blucerchiata shirt. So when the President Edoardo Garrone called me, the only question I asked was how I could help Samp."

When Fiorentina earned a 2-1 win over Sampdoria on November 11th last year, it signalled the end for Delio Rossi. A day later, Mihajlovic was hired. When he arrived, the former defender took over a team sitting in the relegation zone, just two wins in 12 matches to their name.

Samp boss Sinisa Mihajlovic

At his inaugural Press conference, Mihajlovic channelled his inner John F Kennedy. "Ask not what your club can do for you, but what you can do for your club," he began. 'Ich bin ein Berliner' was changed to: "Io sono Sampdoriano." I am Sampdorian. And finally: "Winners find a way. Losers find excuses."

He was a popular choice in Genoa, but memories of his last peninsula coaching job would not have offered much optimism. He replaced Cesare Prandelli in Florence after the Italian took up the Azzurri job. But he walked into a Viola side at the end of its cycle. His 18 months there were not a success. Although to be considered for that role, he had led Catania from a potential relegation to mid-table safety a season earlier. Seem familiar?

Mihajlovic worked quickly to turn the flailing Blucerchiati around. They immediately stemmed the flow of losses, drawing twice with Lazio and Inter. Then came the wins against Catania and Chievo. With it, the gradual climb away from the relegation zone.

Garrone noted Mihajlovic has some of same qualities as Vujadin Boskov, Samp's iconic Coach who led them to their only Scudetto in 1990-91 – notably in dealing with the squad. Miha has first-hand experience, having played under Boskov.

The former defender has also been a hit in the media room, noted for his unusual soundbites. Originally, he planned was to skip this altogether. "I am here only to tell you that from now on the pre-match Press conference will be held by the captain and vice-captain," Mihajlovic said ahead of his first match against Lazio. "That will be the situation until June."

Whatever the reason, he was back fronting the microphones less than a fortnight later.

And just last weekend Mihajlovic entered the Press room armed with a book - The Divine Comedy, an epic poem by Dante Alighieri written in the 14th Century. The book describes his journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. "Dante talked about Ulysses when he urges his men to push past the Pillars of Hercules," said Mihajlovic. "I'd like to do the same, pushing my men to keep going and never rest on their laurels.... When I arrived we were in Hell, now we are in Purgatory and I want to reach Paradise."

His men promptly lost 3-0 to Atalanta. Mihajlovic declared he was 'fed up' and demanded more from his players.

They would need to be wary as they welcomed Verona to the Stadio Luigi Ferraris this past Sunday. Verona had enjoyed a fine return to Serie A, but were in the midst of a losing run. When fronting the media, Mihajlovic evoked Shakespeare. "I will do anything to knock Juliet down from the balcony…"

He wanted a response and after four minutes Gianluca Sansone delivered, knocking in the rebound after Renan's shot hit the post. Verona had chances to equalise, but Samp increased the lead 20 minutes later. It was a bizarre goal, as Manolo Gabbiadini's corner to the edge of the penalty area deflected off the referee, before Renan fired home.

Roberto Soriano scored either side of half-time, firstly getting on the end of Vasco Regini's cut-back. He then drilled in a fierce effort. Veteran Angelo Palombo sealed a fantastic day for Sampdoria when Verona custodian Rafael failed to hold his free kick. It ended 5-0.

Gialloblu boss Andrea Mandorlini says his side got what they deserved. "We collapsed psychologically after the third goal, having wasted four or five incredible chances to score. Lately we are struggling and it was a deserved defeat."

Mihajlovic recalled his pre-match cry. "We threw Juliet off the balcony, but she didn't get badly hurt... Verona have 40 points, after all. Now we are virtually safe. I don't want to see ugly performances like last week."

Since taking over he had orchestrated eight wins and just five defeats in 16 matches. The win sees Samp climb to 11th spot, 13 points clear of the bottom trio. They are even a point and place above Milan. It appears Paradise is just on the horizon for Mihajlovic and his players.

Elsewhere, Juventus kept up the charge with a battling 1-0 win at bottom club Catania. Carlos Tevez netted the only goal on the hour mark. Fiorentina kept their Champions League aspirations alive, defeating 10-man Napoli. Faouzi Ghoulam was sent off in the first half, but it took until two minutes from time for Joaquin to find the winner. It gives Roma a stranglehold on second place, after two first half goals saw them down Chievo.

ITALY Serie A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Juventus	30	26	3	1	67	20	+47	81	W W W W W
2 Roma	29	20	7	2	56	15	+41	67	W W W L D
3 Napoli	30	18	7	5	57	32	+25	61	W L W W D
4 Fiorentina	30	15	6	9	49	33	+16	51	L W W L L
5 Internazionale	29	12	11	6	47	31	+16	47	L W W D D
6 Parma	29	12	11	6	47	34	+13	47	L D W W W
7 Atalanta	30	13	4	13	35	39	-4	43	W W W W W
8 Lazio	30	11	9	10	37	38	-1	42	L D W L W
9 Sampdoria	30	11	7	12	40	43	-3	40	W W L W W
10 Hellas Verona	30	12	4	14	43	52	-9	40	L L L L D
11 Torino	30	10	9	11	43	39	+4	39	L W L L L
12 Milan	30	10	9	11	44	43	+1	39	W D L L L
13 Genoa	30	10	9	11	34	36	-2	39	W D L L W
14 Udinese	29	10	4	15	33	42	-9	34	W L W L D
15 Cagliari	30	7	11	12	28	39	-11	32	W L L D W
16 Chievo	30	7	6	17	26	43	-17	27	W L L W L
17 Bologna	30	5	11	14	24	46	-22	26	L W L D D
18 Livorno	30	6	6	18	32	56	-24	24	L L W L D
19 Sassuolo	30	5	6	19	29	59	-30	21	L L W D L
20 Catania	30	4	8	18	23	54	-31	20	L L L D L

Latest Results	Next Match
Roma 2 - 1 Torino	Inter v Udinese
Chievo 3 - 0 Bologna	Bologna v Atalanta
Cagliari 1 - 0 Verona	Milan v Chievo
Genoa 2 - 0 Lazio	Sassuolo v Roma
Atalanta 2 - 0 Livorno	Torino v Cagliari
Fiorentina 0 - 2 Milan	S'doria v Fiorentina
Catania 2 - 4 Napoli	Verona v Genoa
Juventus 2 - 1 Parma	Lazio v Parma
Sassuolo 1 - 2 Sampdoria	Napoli v Juventus
	Udinese v Catania
	Livorno v Inter

One To Watch This Weekend...

Leaders Juventus travel to the white-hot atmosphere of Naples. Juve have not won at Napoli since 2000, but are undefeated in Antonio Conte's two visits. Napoli need to fend off pressure from fourth-placed Fiorentina.

Spanish La Liga

Pepe Lopez

Leo Messi Hattrick Reignites La Liga After Classic El Clasico

Real Madrid had the Spanish La Liga in its grasp on 2 occasions this past weekend, but failed to capitalise in its opportunity to pull 7 points ahead of their nemesis FC Barcelona. Instead, Leo Messi found the back of the net 3 times, to first equalise against Real Madrid, when trailing 2-1, again when trailing 3-2 and finally to pull ahead when the scores were tied at 3-all.

The odds were stacked in Real Madrid's favor, Real were playing in front of an 85,454 home crowd at the Santiago Bernabau Stadium in Madrid. Add to that, the Madridista's had not lost a home match in any competition for 6 months, also there were reports in the Spanish press speculating that Barcelona's Coach Gerardo Martino was to be sacked at the end of this season in anticipation of not winning any major competitions and in the new year Ronaldo had finally eclipsed his peer Leo Messi for the FIFA World Player of the Year award.

What a match! What more could you ask for? Seven goals, three penalties and a sending off.

As a result, Barcelona's win in Madrid brings the 2 clubs to just 1 point of each other, but ironically gifted Atletico Madrid the opportunity to reclaim top spot, also 1 point ahead of Barcelona, but ahead of Real Madrid by virtue of the aggregate results between themselves and Real. There were 3 penalties and 1 red card, and perhaps there should have been more red cards. It was a match full of controversy and Barcelona's coach had this to say in the post match press conference;

"It makes me sad because I used to enjoy the 'Clásico' from afar and we wouldn't get all the controversy. I felt that there was a lot to discuss in footballing terms in the match the other day, but that's not what's happened. Real Madrid are an extremely powerful team and we were on the ropes at times. As far as I'm concerned we do things the right way. Everyone else is free to do as they see fit. I do what's best for Barcelona. A lack of concentration could jeopardise our chances of winning trophies. I've always honoured my contracts. I have to keep working to do what Barcelona hired me to do: to do a good job and win trophies. I'm not worried about next season. I'm a man of my word and I'm going to fulfil my contract."

Real Madrid's Ronaldo, obviously bitter about the result, made these wild accusations;

"It was tough game. There were some people that didn't want us to win or see Barça out of the title race. I've been here for a long time. It obviously bothers people when Real Madrid win. It makes them jealous. There isn't a level playing field. The referee made so many mistakes. They have to assign a referee who lives up to the game's importance. He was pale and very nervous. I'm not trying to justify myself. There were a lot of things. Some people wanted Barça to stay in the title race and they did."

Already gifted a return to the top of La Liga, Atletico Madrid Coach Diego Simeone was in double delight watching Real Madrid implode after their loss. When questioned about Real Madrid's conspiracy accusations, Simeone gave this response;

"They made me laugh a lot. I've got nothing to say. But they really made me laugh".

SPAIN La Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Real Madrid	28	22	4	2	77	26	+51	70	W W D W W
2 Atlético Madrid	28	21	4	3	64	21	+43	67	W W D L W
3 Barcelona	28	21	3	4	81	22	+59	66	W L W L W
4 Athletic Club	28	15	7	6	51	32	+19	52	D D W W L
5 Real Sociedad	28	13	7	8	49	39	+10	46	W L L W W
6 Villarreal	28	13	6	9	48	34	+14	45	D L D W L
7 Sevilla	28	12	8	8	51	43	+8	44	W W W W D
8 Valencia	28	10	6	12	39	39	+0	36	L D L W D
9 Espanyol	28	10	6	12	32	34	-2	36	L W D L W
10 Levante	28	9	9	10	26	35	-9	36	L L W D W
11 Celta de Vigo	28	9	6	13	33	39	-6	33	W L L D W
12 Granada	28	9	4	15	27	39	-12	31	D W L L W
13 Elche	28	7	9	12	24	40	-16	30	D L W L D
14 Málaga	28	7	8	13	26	36	-10	29	L W D D L
15 Osasuna	28	8	5	15	24	48	-24	29	L L L W D
16 Rayo Vallecano	28	9	2	17	32	62	-30	29	W W W L L
17 Getafe	28	7	7	14	26	45	-19	28	D L D D L
18 Real Valladolid	28	5	11	12	30	48	-18	26	L W D D L
19 Almería	28	7	5	16	27	52	-25	26	L L L D L
20 Real Betis	28	4	7	17	23	56	-33	19	D W D L L

Latest Results	Next Match
Almería 4 - 3 Real Sociedad	Espanyol v Barcelona
Málaga 1 - 2 Espanyol	Celta de Vigo v Sevilla
Elche 0 - 0 Athletic Club	Ath Club v Atlético Madrid
Barcelona 3 - 0 Celta de Vigo	R Madrid v R Vallecano
Rayo Vallecano 1 - 0 Osasuna	R Valladolid v Almería
Atlético Madrid 1 - 0 Granada	Osasuna v R Sociedad
Sevilla 2 - 1 Real Madrid	Villarreal v Elche
	Valencia v Getafe
	Granada v Levante
	Real Betis v Málaga

One To Watch This Weekend...

Athletic Bilbao will host La Liga title contender Atletico Madrid, Fox Sports 3 will broadcast this match Live, Sunday March 30, 2014, 6am AEST.

Valencia will host Getafe from Regional Madrid, Fox Sports 1 will broadcast this match Live, Monday March 31, 2014, 6am AEST.

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CROATIA 1.HNL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Dinamo Zagreb	27	20	5	2	59	19	+40	65	W W W W D
2 Rijeka	27	15	9	3	52	24	+28	54	W W W W D
3 Hajduk Split	27	14	10	3	46	24	+22	52	L D D W W
4 Split	27	11	8	8	30	27	+3	41	D W W L W
5 Lokomotiva Zagreb	27	12	4	11	41	40	+1	40	D L L L L
6 Istra 1961	27	10	6	11	36	43	-7	36	L L D W W
7 Zadar	27	9	5	13	27	43	-16	32	W W W L L
8 Slaven Koprivnica	27	3	9	15	27	49	-22	18	L L L L L
9 Hrvatski Drago…	27	3	7	17	24	42	-18	16	W L L W L
10 Osijek	27	3	7	17	20	51	-31	16	L D L L L

SCOTLAND SPL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Celtic	31	27	3	1	79	15	+64	84	W W W W L
2 Aberdeen	30	18	4	8	43	28	+15	58	D W W W L
3 Motherwell	30	18	3	9	50	44	+6	57	W W D W L
4 Dundee United	31	15	8	8	56	37	+19	53	W W W L W
5 Inverness CT	30	14	6	10	35	30	+5	48	L W L D L
6 St. Johnstone	31	13	5	13	38	32	+6	44	W W L W L
7 Hibernian	31	8	10	13	29	40	-11	34	L L D D L
8 Kilmarnock	31	8	6	17	38	54	-16	30	L L W L D
9 Ross County	31	8	6	17	36	53	-17	30	D L W D L
10 Partick Thistle	31	6	11	14	33	52	-19	29	L L W D W
11 St. Mirren	31	7	6	18	29	51	-22	27	L L L W L
12 Heart of Midlo…	30	5	6	19	26	56	-30	6	L L L L D

SERBIA Super Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Crvena Zvezda	20	15	2	3	40	17	+23	47	W W W W W
2 Partizan	20	14	4	2	40	15	+25	46	W W W W D
3 Čukarički	20	10	5	5	22	16	+6	35	W D W W W
4 Novi Pazar	20	10	4	6	23	18	+5	34	W W W L D
5 Radnički Niš	20	7	9	4	20	14	+6	30	W D D L D
6 Jagodina	20	8	6	6	22	18	+4	30	D D D L L
7 Vojvodina	20	7	9	4	25	22	+3	30	L D D W D
8 Voždovac	20	7	5	8	18	20	-2	26	W D W L W
9 Spartak Subotica	20	6	7	7	15	23	-8	25	D D D D L
10 Napredak	20	6	6	8	30	31	-1	24	L W L D W
11 Radnički Kragu…	20	5	6	9	20	31	-11	21	W L L D D
12 Sloboda Užice	20	5	5	10	16	24	-8	20	L D L L W
13 OFK Beograd	20	5	3	12	19	30	-11	18	L L L D L
14 Donji Srem	20	3	8	9	19	26	-7	17	L L D D D
15 Javor Ivanjica	20	3	8	9	16	24	-8	17	L D L D L
16 Rad Beograd	20	4	3	13	11	27	-16	15	L L D W L

GERMANY Bundesliga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Bayern München	27	25	2	0	79	13	+66	77	W W W W W
2 Borussia Dortmund	27	16	4	7	59	29	+30	52	D W L W W
3 Schalke 04	27	15	6	6	51	37	+14	51	D W W W L
4 Bayer Leverkusen	27	15	2	10	46	33	+13	47	W L L D L
5 Wolfsburg	27	13	5	9	46	41	+5	44	W D D L L
6 Borussia M'gla…	27	12	6	9	46	33	+13	42	L W W L D
7 Mainz 05	27	12	5	10	38	43	-5	41	L L W D W
8 Augsburg	27	11	6	10	40	40	+0	39	L D L W D
9 Hertha BSC	27	10	6	11	36	37	-1	36	L L L D D
10 Hoffenheim	27	9	8	10	60	59	+1	35	W W L L W
11 Eintracht Fran…	27	8	8	11	34	46	-12	32	W W L D W
12 Hannover 96	27	8	5	14	35	49	-14	29	L L W D D
13 Werder Bremen	27	7	8	12	31	53	-22	29	L L D W W
14 Nürnberg	27	5	11	11	32	49	-17	26	W L L L L
15 Freiburg	27	6	8	13	30	48	-18	26	D W W L D
16 Hamburger SV	27	6	6	15	42	56	-14	24	D L W D L
17 Stuttgart	27	6	6	15	40	54	-14	24	L W D D L
18 Eintracht Brau…	27	5	6	16	24	49	-25	21	W L D D D

HOLLAND Eredivisie

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Ajax	28	17	8	3	57	22	+35	59	D D W W W
2 PSV	29	16	5	8	54	36	+18	53	W W W W W
3 Twente	28	14	10	4	59	29	+30	52	W L D D W
4 Vitesse	29	15	7	7	56	38	+18	52	L L W W W
5 Feyenoord	28	15	6	7	59	37	+22	51	W W L D D
6 Heerenveen	29	12	8	9	58	48	+10	44	D L W W D
7 AZ	29	13	4	12	49	44	+5	43	W L W W L
8 PEC Zwolle	29	9	10	10	42	42	+0	37	L W L D D
9 Groningen	29	9	9	11	46	48	-2	36	W L L D L
10 Cambuur	28	9	7	12	33	38	-5	34	W D D W W
11 NAC Breda	28	8	9	11	38	43	-5	33	D L D D D
12 Heracles	28	9	6	13	38	48	-10	33	W L L D L
13 ADO Den Haag	28	9	5	14	33	56	-23	32	W D D W W
14 Utrecht	28	8	7	13	37	53	-16	31	D L D W D
15 Go Ahead Eagles	28	8	7	13	39	57	-18	31	L W L L L
16 RKC Waalwijk	28	6	9	13	41	55	-14	27	L D L L L
17 NEC	29	5	12	12	47	71	-24	27	D D L D L
18 Roda JC	29	6	7	16	40	61	-21	25	L L W L L

TURKEY Süper Lig

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Fenerbahçe	25	18	3	4	56	27	+29	57	W W W D W
2 Beşiktaş	26	14	8	4	45	24	+21	50	W D W D L
3 Galatasaray	26	13	10	3	47	22	+25	49	L D W D W
4 Trabzonspor	25	10	8	7	36	29	+7	38	D W D W D
5 Eskişehirspor	26	10	7	9	28	25	+3	37	D W L D D
6 Sivasspor	26	11	4	11	43	44	-1	37	D L L L L
7 Kasımpaşa	26	9	9	8	39	32	+7	36	D L D D W
8 Karabükspor	26	9	9	8	25	25	+0	36	D D L L L
9 Akhisar Beledi…	26	10	6	10	33	39	-6	36	L D L W D
10 Gaziantepspor	26	10	5	11	30	43	-13	35	L W W W D
11 Gençlerbirliği	26	10	4	12	32	34	-2	34	W W W L D
12 Bursaspor	26	9	7	10	28	34	-6	34	L L W L W
13 Konyaspor	26	9	4	13	35	37	-2	31	W L L D D
14 Antalyaspor	26	5	12	9	27	30	-3	27	D D L D D
15 Rizespor	26	6	9	11	30	36	-6	27	D D W D L
16 Elazığspor	26	8	3	15	33	51	-18	27	L L D W D
17 Kayseri Erciye…	26	7	5	14	27	39	-12	26	D L W W W
18 Kayserispor	26	5	7	14	19	42	-23	22	W W L L L

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Leicester City	37	25	7	5	70	35	+35	82	D D W W W
2 Burnley	38	22	13	3	64	31	+33	79	W W W D W
3 Queens Park Ra…	38	20	9	9	47	32	+15	69	W W L W L
4 Derby County	38	19	9	10	66	45	+21	66	L W D D L
5 Wigan Athletic	37	18	8	11	50	36	+14	62	L W D W W
6 Reading	38	16	11	11	59	45	+14	59	L W D W D
7 Nottingham Forest	38	14	15	9	55	47	+8	57	L L D D L
8 Ipswich Town	38	15	12	11	50	43	+7	57	W W L W L
9 Brighton & Hov…	37	15	11	11	39	31	+8	56	L L W W D
10 AFC Bournemouth	38	14	10	14	49	53	-4	52	W W L D W
11 Blackburn Rovers	37	13	12	12	47	48	-1	51	D D W L L
12 Watford	37	12	13	12	56	46	+10	49	D L W L W
13 Sheffield Wedn…	38	12	12	14	47	43	+4	48	W L W W L
14 Leeds United	37	13	8	16	51	56	-5	47	L W L L L
15 Middlesbrough	38	10	16	12	47	43	+4	46	D L D D W
16 Huddersfield Town	38	12	9	17	49	53	-4	45	D L L D L
17 Bolton Wanderers	38	10	14	14	49	54	-5	44	W D L D W
18 Blackpool	38	10	11	17	32	53	-21	41	L W L W L
19 Birmingham City	38	10	10	18	47	55	-8	40	W L L D L
20 Doncaster Rovers	38	10	10	18	33	56	-23	40	L W D W W
21 Charlton Athletic	35	8	11	16	26	44	-18	35	W L W D D
22 Yeovil Town	38	7	11	20	36	58	-22	32	D D D L L
23 Barnsley	37	7	11	19	34	64	-30	32	W L L L W
24 Millwall	38	7	11	20	35	67	-32	32	L L D L W

LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Wolverhampton …	38	25	8	5	71	25	+46	83	W W L D W
2 Brentford	37	24	7	6	62	35	+27	79	L W W W W
3 Leyton Orient	39	22	10	7	72	36	+36	76	D D L W D
4 Rotherham United	38	20	12	6	71	44	+27	72	W W D W D
5 Preston North End	39	19	15	5	55	38	+17	72	W L D D W
6 Peterborough U…	38	18	4	16	59	52	+7	58	L L W L W
7 Milton Keynes Dons	39	16	7	16	56	53	+3	55	L W L W W
8 Swindon Town	39	15	9	15	56	52	+4	54	W W D L L
9 Walsall	39	13	14	12	44	41	+3	53	W D D D L
10 Sheffield United	37	14	9	14	39	40	-1	51	W L D W W
11 Port Vale	38	15	5	18	51	64	-13	50	L W D L W
12 Gillingham	39	14	6	19	51	63	-12	48	W L D W W
13 Bristol City	39	10	16	13	61	61	+0	46	W D D W W
14 Crawley Town	35	11	13	11	38	43	-5	46	L L W W D
15 Bradford City	38	10	15	13	49	48	+1	45	L L D W L
16 Coventry City	38	15	10	13	68	68	+0	45	W L D L L
17 Colchester United	38	10	13	15	44	51	-7	43	L D W L L
18 Oldham Athletic	39	11	10	18	43	55	-12	43	D W D L L
19 Crewe Alexandra	39	10	10	19	46	73	-27	40	L W D D L
20 Tranmere Rovers	38	10	9	19	47	69	-22	39	L L W L L
21 Carlisle United	38	10	9	19	39	61	-22	39	D L D L L
22 Shrewsbury Town	39	8	14	17	36	49	-13	38	D W L D D
23 Notts County	39	11	4	24	52	69	-17	37	W W L L D
24 Stevenage	38	10	7	21	39	59	-20	37	L L D D W

LEAGUE TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Rochdale	39	22	7	10	64	39	+25	73	W W W W L
2 Scunthorpe United	39	18	17	4	61	37	+24	71	W W W D D
3 Chesterfield	40	19	13	8	62	36	+26	70	W D L W D
4 Fleetwood Town	39	19	7	13	57	46	+11	64	W L W D W
5 Burton Albion	39	17	13	9	42	37	+5	64	W L D D W
6 Oxford United	39	15	14	10	49	40	+9	59	L W L D L
7 York City	39	15	13	11	46	38	+8	58	W W W W W
8 Southend United	39	14	14	11	47	36	+11	56	W D D D L
9 Plymouth Argyle	39	15	10	14	44	44	+0	55	L D W L W
10 Dagenham & Red	39	12	15	12	47	47	+0	51	D D W D W
11 Hartlepool United	39	13	10	16	46	45	+1	49	L L W D L
12 Newport County	38	12	13	13	46	49	-3	49	D W L D L
13 AFC Wimbledon	39	12	12	15	42	47	-5	48	D W D D L
14 Cheltenham Town	39	11	15	13	45	53	-8	48	L L D W D
15 Morecambe	39	12	12	15	45	57	-12	48	L D L D W
16 Exeter City	39	12	11	16	47	50	-3	47	W W D L D
17 Mansfield Town	39	11	14	14	41	52	-11	47	W D D L W
18 Accrington Stanley	39	11	13	15	46	49	-3	46	D D W L D
19 Bury	38	9	17	12	42	43	-1	44	D D L D D
20 Bristol Rovers	38	10	13	15	35	43	-8	43	L D L L W
21 Wycombe Wandere	39	10	12	17	39	48	-9	42	L L D L L
22 Portsmouth	39	9	15	15	38	55	-17	42	L L L D D
23 Northampton Town	39	9	13	17	33	51	-18	40	D D L D W
24 Torquay United	39	9	9	21	35	57	-22	36	L L W L W

Greece Super League

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Olympiakos Piraeus	31	26	2	3	86	17	+69	80	L W W L L
2 Atromitos	31	18	8	5	51	22	+29	62	L W D W W
3 PAOK	30	19	5	6	59	30	+29	62	W D W D W
4 Panathinaikos	31	19	5	7	53	24	+29	62	W W W W W
5 Asteras Tripolis	31	16	9	6	44	29	+15	57	W W L W W
6 OFI	31	10	11	10	26	34	-8	41	W L W D D
7 Panthrakikos	30	11	7	12	35	43	-8	40	W L W L L
8 Panaitolikos	31	10	8	13	31	32	-1	38	D L W L L
9 Ergotelis	31	9	11	11	35	39	-4	38	W L W L D
10 Kalloni	31	11	3	17	28	57	-29	36	L W L L D
11 Levadiakos	31	11	3	17	36	55	-19	36	L W L W L
12 PAS Giannina	30	11	3	16	31	41	-10	36	L L D W L
13 Xanthi	31	10	5	16	37	47	-10	35	L W L L W
14 Panionios	31	9	8	14	29	40	-11	35	D L W L D
15 Veria	31	7	10	14	28	50	-22	31	W L D W D
16 Platanias	31	8	7	16	35	46	-11	31	W L W L L
17 Apollon Smirnis	30	7	8	15	36	48	-12	29	L L W D L
18 Aris	31	3	11	17	24	50	-26	20	L L D L D

France Ligue 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 PSG	30	22	7	1	70	18	+52	73	W W W W W
2 Monaco	30	18	9	3	50	25	+25	63	D W W L W
3 Lille	30	15	9	6	34	19	+15	54	D D W W D
4 Saint-Étienne	30	15	6	9	41	27	+14	51	W L L W W
5 Olympique Lyonnais	30	13	9	8	45	35	+10	48	W L W D D
6 Olympique Mars…	30	12	8	10	39	32	+7	44	L D L L W
7 Reims	30	11	10	9	38	39	-1	43	L D L W L
8 Toulouse	30	11	10	9	38	41	-3	43	D W W W L
9 Bordeaux	30	11	9	10	37	35	+2	42	D D L L W
10 Bastia	30	11	7	12	33	43	-10	40	W L L D L
11 Nice	30	11	5	14	27	34	-7	38	D W W L L
12 Lorient	30	10	6	14	36	41	-5	36	L L W D L
13 Nantes	30	10	6	14	27	33	-6	36	W D D L L
14 Guingamp	30	9	8	13	28	31	-3	35	L W L W W
15 Montpellier	30	6	16	8	35	36	-1	34	L D L D W
16 Rennes	30	8	10	12	35	37	-2	34	W L L L W
17 Evian TG	30	7	10	13	29	45	-16	31	D L W W L
18 Valenciennes	30	7	7	16	32	49	-17	28	L W W L D
19 Sochaux	30	6	7	17	26	53	-27	25	L W L W D
20 Ajaccio	30	3	9	18	28	55	-27	18	W L D L L

Portugal Premeira Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Benfica	24	19	4	1	47	15	+32	61	W W W W W
2 Sporting CP	24	16	6	2	46	17	+29	54	W W D W W
3 Porto	24	15	4	5	44	18	+26	49	W L W D L
4 Estoril	24	12	7	5	36	23	+13	43	D W L W W
5 Nacional	24	8	11	5	33	27	+6	35	D L L D D
6 Sporting Braga	24	9	5	10	34	30	+4	32	D D W L D
7 Vitória Guimarães	24	9	4	11	25	25	+0	31	D L L D L
8 Vitória Setúbal	24	8	6	10	32	36	-4	30	D W D L W
9 Marítimo	24	8	6	10	33	39	-6	30	L L W L W
10 Académica	24	7	8	9	16	25	-9	29	L D D W D
11 Rio Ave	24	7	7	10	19	25	-6	28	D W D D L
12 Gil Vicente	24	7	5	12	21	32	-11	26	D L W W L
13 Arouca	24	5	7	12	23	36	-13	22	L W L L D
14 Paços de Ferreira	24	6	4	14	24	45	-21	22	W W L W L
15 Olhanense	24	4	6	14	15	38	-23	18	D L D L W
16 Belenenses	24	3	8	13	12	29	-17	17	L L D L L

One Game At A Time

France

Nice v PSG
Sochaux v Olympique Mars…
Ajaccio v Toulouse
Evian TG v Monaco
Montpellier v Valenciennes
Nantes v Bordeaux
Reims v Lorient
Rennes v Bastia
Lille v Guingamp
Olympique Lyonnais v Saint-Étienne

Germany

Schalke 04 v Hertha BSC
Bayern München v Hoffenheim
Bayer Leverkusen v Eintracht Brau…
Stuttgart v Borussia Dortmund
Wolfsburg v Eintracht Fran…
Mainz 05 v Augsburg
Freiburg v Nürnberg
Borussia M'gla… v Hamburger SV
Hannover 96 v Werder Bremen

Croatia

Hajduk Split v Zadar
Lokomotiva Zagreb v Hrvatski Drago…
Osijek v Dinamo Zagreb
Istra 1961 v Rijeka
Slaven Koprivnica v Split

Serbia

Radnički Kragu… v Rad Beograd
Partizan v Sloboda Užice
Radnički Niš v OFK Beograd
Novi Pazar v Vojvodina
Čukarički v Javor Ivanjica
Spartak Subotica v Jagodina
Voždovac v Napredak
Donji Srem v Crvena Zvezda

English Championship

Burnley v Leicester City
Leeds United v Doncaster Rovers
Brighton & Hov… v Middlesbrough
Yeovil Town v Barnsley
Birmingham City v Bournemouth
Reading v Huddersfield Town
Sheffield Wedn… v Watford
Millwall v Blackburn Rovers
Queens Park Ra… v Blackpool
Bolton Wanderers v Wigan Athletic
Derby County v Charlton Athletic
Ipswich Town v Nottingham Forest

English League One

Walsall v Shrewsbury Town
Preston North End v Crawley Town
Leyton Orient v Bradford City
Crewe Alexandra v Coventry City
Milton Keynes Dons v Wolverhampton …
Notts County v Colchester United
Tranmere Rovers v Carlisle United
Stevenage v Port Vale
Swindon Town v Sheffield United
Oldham Athletic v Brentford
Rotherham United v Bristol City

English League Two

Northampton Town v Bury
Mansfield Town v AFC Wimbledon
Exeter City v Accrington Stanley
Newport County v Portsmouth
Southend United v Torquay United
Fleetwood Town v Rochdale
Dagenham & Red… v Oxford United
Bristol Rovers v Morecambe
Hartlepool United v Cheltenham Town
Scunthorpe United v Wycombe Wanderers
York City v Burton Albion
Bury v Bristol Rovers

Scotland

Heart of Midlo… v Dundee United
Aberdeen v Kilmarnock
Celtic v St. Mirren
Inverness CT v Partick Thistle
Motherwell v Ross County
St. Johnstone v Hibernian

Greece

Panaitolikos v Veria
Panionios v Asteras Tripolis
Atromitos v Panathinaikos
PAOK v Kalloni
Ergotelis v PAS Giannina
Panthrakikos v Apollon Smirnis
Levadiakos v OFI
Olympiakos Piraeus v Aris
Xanthi v Platanias

Turkey

Gaziantepspor v Kasımpaşa
Akhisar Beledi…v Eskişehirspor
Antalyaspor v Konyaspor
Beşiktaş v Kayserispor
Rizespor v Karabükspor
Kayseri Erciye… v Elazığspor
Bursaspor v Sivasspor
Galatasaray v Fenerbahçe
Trabzonspor v Gençlerbirliği

Holland

NAC Breda v Utrecht
Vitesse v Heerenveen
NEC v Heracles
PSV v Groningen
Feyenoord v Go Ahead Eagles
Cambuur v AZ
Ajax v Twente
Roda JC v RKC Waalwijk
ADO Den Haag v PEC Zwolle

Portugal

Rio Ave v Sporting Braga
Vitória Guimarães v Gil Vicente
Marítimo v Sporting CP
Olhanense v Nacional
Paços de Ferreira v Arouca
Benfica v Académica
Porto v Belenenses
Vitória Setúbal v Estoril

European Results

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

Sheffield Wedn… 1 - 0 Brighton & Hov…
Ipswich Town 2 - 1 Derby County
Leicester City 1 - 1 Yeovil Town
Nottingham Forest 0 - 1 Charlton Athletic
Huddersfield Town 2 - 2 Middlesbrough
Watford 3 - 3 Blackburn Rovers
AFC Bournemouth 4 - 1 Leeds United
Burnley 2 - 0 Doncaster Rovers
Queens Park Ra… 1 - 0 Wigan Athletic
Millwall 2 - 3 Birmingham City
Reading 1 - 3 Barnsley
Bolton Wanderers 1 - 0 Blackpool

ENGLISH LEAGUE ONE

Preston North End 3 - 1 Peterborough U…
Bradford City 0 - 2 Walsall
Carlisle United 0 - 0 Shrewsbury Town
Leyton Orient 1 - 1 Oldham Athletic
Crewe Alexandra 1 - 3 Notts County
Bristol City 5 - 0 Port Vale
Milton Keynes Dons 0 - 1 Gillingham
Crawley Town 0 - 2 Sheffield United
Rotherham United 3 - 0 Brentford
Wolverhampton … 4 - 2 Colchester United
Tranmere Rovers 1 - 2 Swindon Town
Coventry City 1 - 0 Stevenage

ENGLISH LEAGUE TWO

Southend United 3 - 0 Oxford United
Burton Albion 1 - 0 Wycombe Wanderers
Cheltenham Town 0 - 2 Scunthorpe United
Newport County 0 - 0 Bury
Rochdale 3 - 0 Portsmouth
Plymouth Argyle 1 - 2 Exeter City
Dagenham & Red… 0 - 0 Accrington Stanley
Fleetwood Town 3 - 1 Bristol Rovers
Hartlepool United 2 - 4 Mansfield Town
York City 1 - 0 Torquay United
Chesterfield 1 - 0 Morecambe
Northampton Town 2 - 2 AFC Wimbledon

CROATIA

Lokomotiva Zagreb 0 - 0 Split
Hajduk Split 0 - 2 Dinamo Zagreb
Istra 1961 0 - 2 Zadar
Slaven Koprivnica 0 - 3 Rijeka
Hrvatski Drago… 2 - 0 Osijek

FRANCE

Lorient 0 - 1 PSG
Olympique Mars… 0 - 1 Rennes
Bastia 2 - 0 Reims
Bordeaux 1 - 1 Nice
Nantes 2 - 1 Montpellier
Toulouse 1 - 1 Evian TG
Valenciennes 2 - 3 Ajaccio
Saint-Étienne 3 - 1 Sochaux
Guingamp 0 - 1 Olympique Lyonnais
Monaco 1 - 1 Lille

GERMANY

Borussia Dortmund 0 - 0 Schalke 04
Werder Bremen 1 - 3 Wolfsburg
Eintracht Brau… 3 - 1 Mainz 05
Hertha BSC 1 - 3 Bayern München
Nürnberg 2 - 0 Stuttgart
Hoffenheim 3 - 1 Hannover 96
Augsburg 1 - 3 Bayer Leverkusen
Hamburger SV 1 - 1 Freiburg
Eintracht Fran… 1 - 0 Borussia M'gla…

GREECE

Veria 3 - 2 Xanthi
Platanias 2 - 0 Levadiakos
Panionios 1 - 1 Panaitolikos
Aris 0 - 2 Ergotelis
OFI 2 - 0 Atromitos
Asteras Tripolis 2 - 1 Olympiakos Piraeus
Panathinaikos 3 - 0 Kalloni

HOLLAND

Twente 2 - 1 AZ
PEC Zwolle 2 - 0 Go Ahead Eagles
NEC 2 - 2 Utrecht
Feyenoord 2 - 0 Heerenveen
NAC Breda 0 - 0 Ajax
Groningen 3 - 1 Vitesse
Heerenveen 2 - 2 NEC
PSV 3 - 1 Roda JC
AZ 2 - 1 PEC Zwolle

PORTUGAL

Rio Ave 1 - 1 Sporting Braga
Vitória Guimarães 0 - 0 Gil Vicente
Marítimo 1 - 3 Sporting CP
Olhanense 1 - 1 Nacional
Paços de Ferreira 3 - 1 Arouca
Benfica 3 - 0 Académica
Porto 1 - 0 Belenenses
Vitória Setúbal 1 - 1 Estoril

SCOTLAND

Ross County 1 - 1 Aberdeen
St. Mirren 0 - 1 St. Johnstone
Dundee United 2 - 1 Inverness CT
Partick Thistle 1 - 5 Celtic

SERBIA

Radnički Kragu… 2 - 1 Rad Beograd
Novi Pazar 2 - 0 Vojvodina
Spartak Subotica 1 - 1 Jagodina
Voždovac 3 - 1 Napredak
Donji Srem 0 - 1 Crvena Zvezda
Partizan 1 - 0 Sloboda Užice
Radnički Niš 2 - 1 OFK Beograd
Čukarički 2 - 1 Javor Ivanjica

TURKEY

Trabzonspor 0 - 0 Kasımpaşa
Rizespor 0 - 0 Eskişehirspor
Bursaspor 1 - 2 Konyaspor
Galatasaray 0 - 1 Kayserispor
Antalyaspor 0 - 0 Karabükspor
Gençlerbirliği 3 - 1 Elazığspor
Kayseri Erciye… 1 - 1 Sivasspor
Beşiktaş 3 - 0 Akhisar Beledi…
Gaziantepspor 0 - 3 Fenerbahçe

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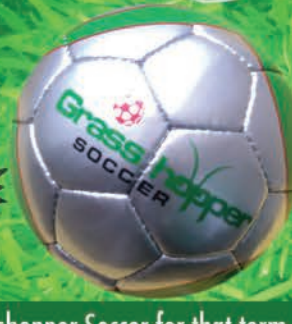

*Cost of the free come & try class will be included in enrolment fee if the child decides to continue on. Offer only applies if the child doesn't return back to Grasshopper Soccer for that term.

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